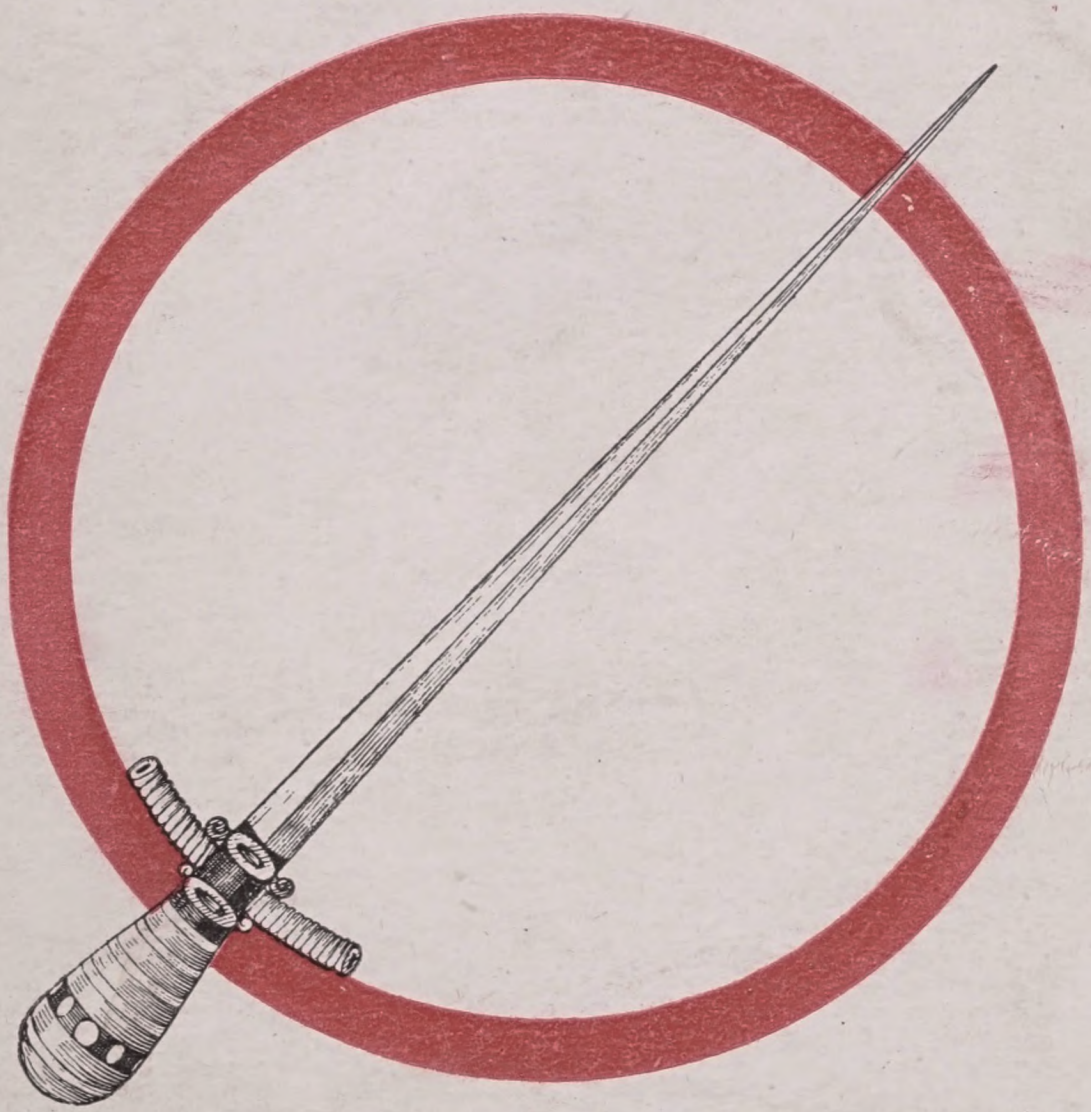
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# The Russian Refugee

By HENRY R. WILSON



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THE

# RUSSIAN REFUGEE

## A Tale of the Blue Ridge

BY

HENRY R. WILSON

Fiction is properly but gauze drapery through which the lineaments of the real figure may be detected.

"Pygmies are pygmies still, though perched on Alps;
And pyramids are pyramids in vales.
Each man makes his own stature, builds himself:
Virtue alone outbuilds the Pyramids;
Her monuments shall last when Egypt's fall."

—*Night Thoughts*

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# CONTENTS.


PAGE

CHAPTER I.

ELSIE, . . . . . 1

CHAPTER II.

"THE GIRAFFE," . . . . . 13

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERY, . . . . . 29

CHAPTER IV.

THE CITY FOLKS, . . . . . 34

CHAPTER V.

A NEW WORLD, . . . . . 40

CHAPTER VI.

THE "SCARECROW," AND HIS DARK LANTERN, . . 54

CHAPTER VII.

"OH! BRAVE NEW WORLD, THAT HAS SUCH PEOPLE IN'T," . 65

CHAPTER VIII.

SUNSHINE AGAIN, . . . . . 77

CHAPTER IX.

A CONUNDRUM, . . . . . 88

CHAPTER X.

PAGE
A New Face, . . . . . 94

CHAPTER XI.

A Warm Experience, . . . . . 106

CHAPTER XII.

Subterranean History, . . . . . 120

CHAPTER XIII.

Unwelcome Visitors, . . . . . 137

CHAPTER XIV.

Trans-atlantic Visitors, . . . . . 152

CHAPTER XV.

Face to Face at Last, . . . . . 164

CHAPTER XVI.

"A Man's a Man for a' That," . . . . . 194

CHAPTER XVII.

I Hope I don't Intrude, . . . . . 214

CHAPTER XVIII.

Playing with Fire, . . . . . 229

CHAPTER XIX.

A Passage at Arms, . . . . . 236

CHAPTER XX.

PAGE
A Crisis, . . . . . 261

CHAPTER XXI.

The Red Circle, . . . . . 279

CHAPTER XXII.

Engaged, . . . . . 294

CHAPTER XXIII.

A Thunder-cloud, . . . . . 299

CHAPTER XXIV.

A Bit of Blue Sky, . . . . . 304

CHAPTER XXV.

Burying the Hatchet, . . . . . 309

CHAPTER XXVI.

Wedding Bells, . . . . . 320

CHAPTER XXVII.

The "Great Booty" Mine, . . . . . 330

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Solving Problems, . . . . . 336

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Trial, . . . . . 345

CHAPTER XXX.

PAGE

In Deep Waters, . . . . . 366

CHAPTER XXXI.

An Ordeal, . . . . . 375

CHAPTER XXXII.

A Friend in Need, . . . . . 386

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A Nocturnal Surprise, . . . . . 405

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Unmasking, . . . . . 418

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Woes Cluster; Rare are Solitary Woes," . . 429

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Nemesis, . . . . . 442

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Occult Therapeutics, . . . . . 450

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Avenger, . . . . . 462

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Way of the Transgressor, . . . . 469

CHAPTER XL.

PAGE
REVELATIONS, . . . . . 473

CHAPTER XLI.

A NEW PATIENT, . . . . . 480

CHAPTER XLII.

THE HEALING POWER, . . . . . 491

CHAPTER XLIII.

A NEW DEPARTURE, . . . . . 505

CHAPTER XLIV.

A HALF CONFESSION, . . . . . 519

CHAPTER XLV.

HOPE DEFERRED, . . . . . 527

CHAPTER XLVI.

TO SOLVE A PROBLEM, . . . . . 543

CHAPTER XLVII.

CIVILIZED AND SAVAGE, . . . . . 551

CHAPTER XLVIII.

PERILS BY THE WAY, . . . . . 560

CHAPTER XLIX.

HOME AGAIN, . . . . . 571

CHAPTER L.

PAGE
SUNSET GLORIES, . . . . . 575

CHAPTER LI.

THE FINAL TESTAMENT, . . . . . 584

CHAPTER LII.

"LIKE A PALE MARTYR IN HIS SHIRT OF FIRE," . . 590

CHAPTER LIII.

HEART LANGUAGE, . . . . . 597

CHAPTER LIV.

DAY-LIGHT COMES AND THE SHADOWS FLY, . . . 600

# THE RUSSIAN REFUGEE.

## CHAPTER I.

### ELSIE.

Mr. Hastings' home, Hermitage, was about two miles from the pretty little town of Melville, and a very charming spot it was. The name dated back over half a century, and was given because of a solitary who once lived there. "A strange being he must have been, according to all accounts," said the present proprietor to a friend, "and a man of considerable original power, I should judge, by the impression he has left on this neighborhood. He resided here many years, having purchased the place when it was almost entirely virgin forest, and by skill and industry, aided by liberal capital, gradually developed a handsome estate. This house was erected by him, and was a marvel of comfort and elegance for those times. But becoming discontented, it is supposed, at the encroaching civilization, he suddenly disappeared, having quietly disposed of the property, which, after changing owners once or twice, fell into my hands. The hermit was reputed to be a wealthy Russian. Money he always had in abundance, so the early neighbors said, and indeed the mansion of stone and the solid wall inclosing the spacious lawn seemed to prove this. However, he was not actually a hermit, although called so, for he had two companions. One was an old servant, who occupied a small cottage some short

distance from the house, and went to and fro, forming the medium with the outer world, and the other a lad of a few years, reputed to be the proprietor's son. About one hundred and forty acres belonged to the estate, which was untilled, with the exception of a garden in front of the house well filled with native and foreign plants. In this garden the misanthropist spent much of his time, and the superstition of the curious soon spread reports that these plants were used for unholy purposes. Indeed, the hermit was both shunned and feared by the scattered denizens of the vicinity, the very thing which, no doubt, he desired. These are, in short, what items I have succeeded in gathering of this singular predecessor of mine, although I have spent both time and money in trying to ferret out his history. Some of the good people round about profess to believe that the old fellow is living yet, or, at least, has the power to appear now and then for his own diversion and the terror of the beholders."

"O papa! he couldn't be living yet, surely, for it is said to be seventy years, at least, since he disappeared, and the local tradition says he was an old man at that time," remarked Elsie Hastings, the only child of the proprietor.

"Which would make the worthy hermit a pretty ripe age—one hundred and forty or thereabouts," laughed the guest, Mr. St. Johns.

"Old Chloe says she saw him when she was a girl, and that he looked quite ancient," continued the daughter.

"And if you add seventy years to an ancient," said her father, regarding her fondly, "what will be the result?"

"A fossil, papa, of course; and, like most fossils, only to be found in the earth, buried out of sight," responded the young lady, promptly.

Very bright and cheery looked Elsie this morning, as she stood beside her parent. The flush and sparkle of girlhood had just given way to the beauty and power

of womanhood. She was a brunette, fully developed, with well-rounded, rather muscular figure, slightly above the medium height, a self-reliant, healthy, vigorous, handsome woman. Brought up in this suburban retreat, untrammelled and unchecked, only lovingly guided, she had developed a degree of health and strength which was delightful to see. Nor had her mind been neglected, for her fond parent had been largely her tutor, and carefully laid a solid basis of useful knowledge, which she had ably supplemented by judicious reading in the well-stocked library.

"I gave my Elsie the run of the library, knowing well that there was no book there which could injure her," said the gentleman, in reply to a question from his guest. "I did not feel justified in making my mind a criterion for hers. Different people require different mental aliment. Turn a cow, horse, goat, and sheep into a common pasture, and each will select just such plants as are adapted to its needs. Certain plants will be eaten by all, though not in the same proportions. But you will find that the cow will eat some plants which the others will not touch, and so on of the horse, goat, and sheep. So in a way, different individuals of our species need different intellectual food, and from books, lectures, conversations, etc., will, if healthily developed, take just what they require."

"O father! Cousin Warren has had quite an adventure," exclaimed the daughter, who had been summoned from the room, re-entering the library, where the two gentlemen sat engaged in conversation after breakfast, "and has had a pretty narrow escape of his life, too, I should think," handing her father an open letter.

"Indeed? I thought Warren could take pretty good care of himself; but, if Mr. St. Johns will permit, I will glance over the letter while you show him those shells I brought you last week."

"Just what I should like," responded the guest, springing up.

"I will join you in a moment," said Mr. Hastings, as they disappeared.

The letter referred to was about four pages long, written from London, and giving the details of an adventure at a suburban villa. He claimed to be very busy in his medical work and sight-seeing, and probably would not return to America for some months. The letter concluded with a postscript:

"Now, dear coz, take care of yourself and of my uncle, for he is one among a thousand, in spite of his peculiar notions of educating young ladies. W. S."

"Well," remarked Mr. Hastings, on joining his daughter and guest a few moments later, "I imagine Warren has some comical ideas of my peculiar notions, as he audaciously terms them; but he is a good fellow, and I shall be glad to see him back."

"Why, father, Mr. St. Johns says he knows Cousin Warren."

"Yes, I met him in the White Mountains two or three summers ago, and found him a capital companion. I shall be glad to meet him again," said the guest.

A servant came to announce that the horses were at the door, for the party to take a ride to a somewhat famous mountain gorge, a few miles distant, which was a favorite visiting resort for strangers. Mr. and Miss Hastings were capital riders, and the visitor thought he could manage to keep up, and so saddle-horses were chosen in preference to a carriage.

There are few modes of locomotion so exhilarating as riding, if one has a firm seat and hand. You are a Centaur for the time being, and partake of the strength and speed of the animal you ride. Elsie gloried in it, and on this fine November morning her face glowed with excitement as they

cantered along. "Let sentimentalists say what they please, there is no true beauty without physical health. Indeed that is beauty, and there is no other, so far as the body is concerned," said St. Johns, as Elsie dashed on ahead, just to try her horse's mettle, as she said.

"That has been my view in training my girl," returned her father, "she has grown up as unfettered as a boy, and knows nothing of the small waists, languid air, pale complexion, and mincing, slow step of fashionable life."

"I wish I could say as much for my two daughters," said his companion, "but it is so different bringing up a family in a city."

"True; the women so often, even with the best intentions, fall, ere they are aware, into the maelstrom of fashion, and with their children become mere waifs floating on the whirling waters of bad physical habits, which almost inevitably result in life-long invalidism."

The city man sighed as he answered: "I suppose mine are no worse than the majority, but it sometimes seems to me that there is nothing natural about them. Artificiality is everywhere. I struggled against it as long as I could, but a business man, away all day, and only home with his family evenings and Sundays, can do but little."

"Well, well, their natural good sense may make it all right yet" rejoined his friend, knowing that this was a sore point with him.

Mr. St. Johns was a lawyer in a distant city, who had after entering practice married a dashing fashionable girl, the child of a prominent merchant. They had three children, two girls and a boy. The latter was of age, and had lately graduated at Harvard. And fine-looking young people they were, but devoted slaves to all the foibles of the world of gaiety and fashion. The mother was still very attractive and much attached to her husband and family, but a bond servant to Madam Grundy.

If that autocrat had decreed that the headdress should be four feet high, Mrs. St. Johns, with a feeble inward remonstrance from her common sense, which still lived, but in an unhealthy condition from want of exercise, would have sent at once for the coiffure artist, and given orders for self and daughters. "If you think that three feet eleven inches and a half will do, mademoiselle, why that will answer, I leave it entirely to your judgment. But do not let us be outré." Should the artist unwittingly reply that she thought they might venture to make a half inch concession without danger of incurring social ostracism, yet long experience had taught her that such decision would be by no means final. For in all probability the stately footman from the St. Johns mansion would come an hour or so later with a pretty little scented note from madame saying, "Dear Mademoiselle, on mature thought I have concluded to have our coiffures en régle. L. St. J."

Those artful and ingenious people, the milliners, dressmakers, and tailors, those rulers in the kingdom of cloth, those members of the costume aristocracy, how they must laugh at the foibles and weaknesses of those who daily crowd and throng their audience chambers. Call them servants, dependents, etc.? What nonsense! Fashion is queen, and these experts are the Grand Chamberlains and Ladies of Honor, to whom all must sue and pay court, who hope for favors from the sovereign. The ladies of the St. Johns family yielded implicitly to her will, never questioning her wisdom. More habit this, perhaps, than deficiency in reasoning power. But how much easier it is, and how much more smoothly will life glide, if we can permit others to do our thinking for us. To reason, to assert one's individuality requires effort and expenditure of force, and by avoiding unnecessary thought we conserve this force, and so retain a large surplus of vitality for more congenial use.

The ride to the "Big Ravine," the popular name, was a

treat in every sense, and most thoroughly enjoyed by the guest. The Big Ravine was, as said before, an immense gorge, cut or ploughed through the mountain chain, which skirted the landscape here. Wonderfully grand and picturesque this deep dark chasm showed from the point where they stood. Hundreds of feet deep, the eye wandered, down, down, finding no bottom. Naught but profundity, and tree-tops, and gloom! The horses were tied to trees in a grove near by, and the party proceeded on foot to explore the vicinity. Elsie was more familiar with the locality than the gentlemen, and so, by tacit consent led the way, and a pretty wild way it was, tangled and overgrown by brambles and brushwood. The path led continuously downward for about half a mile and then turned upward for a hundred or so feet to a sort of natural bridge leading across a small cañon which entered the Big Ravine. This natural bridge was worth, as the guest enthusiastically said, "walking a thousand miles to see." In the volcanic action which disrupted the mountain and formed the gorge, enormous fragments of rock had been hurled from below, and three of them in descending had fallen immediately over this seam or fissure and become immovably wedged together, the centre fragment forming the key-stone of the arch. It was now densely covered with mosses and creeping plants. Standing on the middle of the bridge the eye could explore to some extent the Big Ravine and catch the white sheen of tossing water as it reflected the few wandering sunbeams which penetrated its otherwise inscrutable gloom.

"'There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen,'" quoted Mr. Hastings, "and certainly this is the place."

Being a little uneasy about the horses, as one or two tramps had been passed on the road, evidently bound for the Ravine, the two gentlemen decided to return to the clump of

trees where the animals were, and await the arrival of Elsie, who desired to explore the opposite side of the chasm for ferns and leaves, of which she was making a collection. Springing forward she began ascending the great bowlder which lay just beyond the bridge on the other side, and over which the path lay. This bowlder seemed to belong to the same group which constituted the bridge, but having been hindered in some way had come to a halt before reaching the cañon. Being some twenty feet high it tasked her energies considerably. But she had the spring and elastic step of a mountain chamois and almost as much endurance. At least so thought the two gentlemen who watched her as she slowly but surely gained the dizzy summit, on which, lingering for a moment to enjoy the view down the great gorge, she waved her hand, and shouting, "*Au revoir*," speedily disappeared.

"Why she has the courage of Zenobia. I would not dare trust one of my girls over there alone. Isn't it rather risky?"

"Not at all," returned her father, "Elsie is as sure-footed as a hunter, and does not know fear."

The young lady pursued her way, jumping and climbing and clinging along the narrow goat path which led from the bridge and skirted the very edge or brink of the vast cañon. The scene was wild, and weird, and threatening enough to try the nerves of any but an accomplished wood-ranger. But Elsie felt as much at home as on her father's lawn. Earth and sky seemed to smile on her in unison, and the mountain air tasted like nectar. Vigorous health and the splendid confidence of youth, touched everything she gazed at as with magic wand, making rock, tree, plant, even the dark gorge itself, glow and sparkle and scintillate in the dancing rays of the autumn sun.

"I feel this morning as if I could fly!" she exclaimed, quickening her pace to a run. Tossing her hat from her

head over the left shoulder, held by the loosely tied ribbon under her chin, her right hand firmly clasping a mountain staff cut for her by her father, she dashed forward. Her abundant black hair giving outline to a face of the Italian type, her nut-brown complexion and the easy grace of her movements, all seemed to mark her a child of nature, sympathetic with its varied moods and rejoicing in its freedom. Man's animal nature ought to be as free and bounding as that of the inferior creatures, but civilization, that complex thing, seems to check, and hinder, and depress, and throw obstacles in his path, and fetters around his limbs. Seeking to understand nature, and to pry into her secrets and search out her mysteries, he too often loses sight of the simple lessons which she would fain teach him—the primary truths which the savage learns at once, but which the civilized man with a strange mental obliquity either sees not, or forgets, or ignores. Let us go back to the first principles and learn from the untutored man of the forest, or even from the dog, the horse, the deer, those humble disciples of nature, that man has enslaved, but failed to corrupt. Let him learn from them that simplicity in diet, temperance, exercise, are the conditions of sound sleep, vigorous digestion, freedom from disease, and the capacity to endure. We have levied on earth, air, water, for contributions to our tables, daily using food in quality and quantity that could only be properly digested and assimilated under very active conditions of physical exercise in the open air. Yet we imagine half an hour's easy sauntering in the twilight perhaps, is exercise, or may be a drive of a few miles. "Yes, but I often drive two hour's a day," says one. True, madame, and it does your horse good, and that is why he looks so strong and never complains of headache, or the blues, or dyspepsia. Why not imitate him and take some of his medicine—exercise? These were the teachings to which Elsie had listened through her growing years, and

the result had justified the wisdom of the course. Regardless of the weather, daily vigorous exercise in the open air was as invariable as taking food, and she and sickness, in the ordinary sense, were strangers.

She was now opposite the widest part of the great cañon, and following a sharp path leading downward, arrived at a point where she could look into and across the awful depths of the vast chasm. What a tiny creature is man when he faces material existence in its massive forms and gigantic developments. This young woman, bright, active, cheery as she ordinarily was, now felt depressed and quieted in presence of nature's grandeur. She felt as if before the throne of the Infinite, with the eye of the Eternal fixed upon her. There are moments of worship which can only come in scenes like these. An atom, a speck, she seemed to be, cast athwart these splendid creations; not of them, and yet partaking enough of the material nature to feel some degree of affinity with them. But when most awed, when the feeling of helplessness and weakness, before such strength and power, and mightiness, was greatest, the thought came, "But after all, I can feel awe and wonder at them, and appreciate, in some faint way their, majesty, while they regard me with the stony gaze of matter chained in the lethargy of unconsciousness. I think and feel, and can move from place to place. But ten thousand appalling catastrophes might occur and the same calm indifference would reign supreme here, as ever." These reflections seemed to break the chain which bound her, and she felt at once in her whole being "the majesty of man.'

Left motherless at an early age, and thrown much upon her own resources, she had sought and found in nature a friend, not dead, cold, and unresponsive as so many find her, but warm, sympathetic, loving. So, usually, inspired by happy associations, it was amid such

scenes as these, that her thoughts flowed freest; but yet she would at times fall into a sort of trance condition of inert comtemplation, in which she seemed merged in creation, and a part of it, all individuality apparently lost. Then when her personality came back to her she would sometimes experience a revulsion as in the present instance, and become not a mere votary at the temple altar, but the goddess within the shrine; not a mere intimate in the mansion, but the mistress herself. Rapidly continuing her ramble she arrived at a platform of rock which jutted out into the gorge, forming an abrupt break in the continuity of the cliff margin. From this point the ravine receded sharply and widened considerably, as a gulf will before joining the ocean. This was a coigne of vantage which gave the sweep of the cañon and the broad valley in the distance, above and beyond the vast granite rampart which formed the upper end of the ravine.

"Oh, I could live here forever," she exclaimed, as she seated herself on the edge of the flat rock and peered down into the obscurity below. "But my time has about expired and I must be returning," she said vexatiously, glancing at the tiny watch, her treasured memento of "mother," which she carried at her girdle. "But I must have some of those wonderful leaves down there." The leaves in question were some of unusual brilliancy, painted in marvellous tints by the brush of the artist specially commissioned to spangle and adorn the autumn woods. The forests and glades had clung tenaciously to their green robes this year, but were now beginning to flame and glow in every direction, and the leaves, too, were falling by myriads, as if modestly to hide their gay colors. The coveted treasures which Elsie spoke of were on a tree growing about fifty feet below, and springing obliquely from the side of the declivity. Letting herself down by some tenacious vines which grew over and around the rocky plat-

form on which she stood, the daring girl, with the nimbleness and agility of a panther, succeeded in reaching the desired objects. Plucking the choicest and most rarely tinted ones, she placed them in her bosom and prepared to regain her former position. Easy to think of, but by no means easy of execution, she soon discovered, when, after repeated fruitless attempts, she found herself farther down, instead of up, the precipitous side of the ravine. Finally, making a desperate effort, she sprang upward, and reached, by the aid of the clinging vines, a rocky ledge, or rather bowlder, bedded in the side of the cliff. Taking breath preparatory to further effort, for she realized she was in rather a perilous position, and besides feeling naturally anxious to rejoin her father and guest in good time, she rested for a moment. Suddenly the landscape, as she swept her gaze around, seemed to be moving! What was the matter? She glanced quickly to the opposite side of the chasm and it seemed to be rising up in the air. The thought flashed on her, "the ground is settling beneath me." Quicker and quicker—tree, bowlder, and passenger—the earth for several yards round slid down the surface of the rock. Down, down, they went, hindered somewhat by opposing shrubs and small trees. A land-slide—a small one to be sure, but yet carrying a great mass of earth with it, and the girl clinging wildly to the tree whose bright leaves had lured her down there, and which somehow kept its balance. A sudden crashing of tree-tops, and her queer vehicle came to a halt with a shock which dashed her violently down, and in an instant the world for her was collapsed.

## CHAPTER II.

### "THE GIRAFFE."

Mr. Hastings and his friend waited patiently for the return of the youngest member of the party, for about two hours. It was then suggested by the host that they should mount and ride along the road skirting the Great Gorge, so as to enable St. Johns to form a somewhat clearer idea of the majestic ravine. "Elsie may return in the meantime, but she will wait for us, as I shall pin this little note on her saddle-cloth, telling her we shall soon be back."

"But surely it is time she was here now. I fear something has happened to her," said the guest, anxiously.

The father smiled, and answered, "The time for feeling anxiety for her has long gone by. I have the most implicit confidence in her skill and prudence. She has wandered farther than she expected, not finding what she wanted readily. She will certainly be here soon."

Nevertheless, Mr. St. Johns was certain he detected a shade of anxiety in the voice and manner of his friend, and the glance he occasionally cast in the direction the daughter had gone. After a couple of miles' canter the equestrians reined in their steeds at a point where the road curved almost at the very edge of a stupendous precipice, where the more or less dense foliage and shrubbery which had hitherto obscured the view broke away abruptly, and left open to them a secure almost unrivalled in extent and grandeur. The sky was light blue, flecked with fleecy clouds, and the sun shone brightly, giving that peculiar white light and brilliancy,

with but little heat, which is so often noticed in the late fall. A quiet, as of the eternal, seemed to fall upon and enshroud them, as they concentrated their very beings in vision, and drank in the scene. The horses were still, as if cut in stone, and seemed to realize the occasion. At last their reverie was broken by the swoop of an eagle which crossed their vision and soared up—up—up—taking their gaze with it.

"That is ideal life," said Mr. Hastings—"the life of a free, strong creature like that. Our existence seems tame beside it. It seems to me, when I gaze at a panorama like this, that I would give years of my human life to be for a few hours a creature like that bird, to swoop through this vast concavity, over and into and round this mighty gorge, viewing it from a hundred standpoints, and, as it were, grasping the scene in its entirety. The birds' life must be the grandest in the world."

"I question if yon creature appreciates, in his quick, changing series of views, and his thousand glimpses of this scene, anything like as much as we do from our present fixed point," was the answer of his companion.

"Possibly not, for our imagination gives us larger and more varied flight than he has, and man only seems able to understand nature. However, let us return, for my daughter must be at the trysting-place by this time."

On reaching the grove, Mr. Hastings said nervously as they dismounted, "We have been gone an hour and she has not returned. Can it be possible that she has lost her way, or met with any mishap?"

"Let us by all means follow her," said Mr. St. Johns.

"Oh no, I would not think of tiring you; just remain here, and I will walk rapidly in the direction she has taken, and may shortly meet her. Occasionally she is unconscious of the lapse of time, when after favorite flowers."

But St. Johns insisting, the two gentlemen proceeded to

the natural bridge, crossed it as rapidly as they could, and turned into the path which Elsie had actually taken.

"I am not so familiar with this range as Elsie; but yet know it pretty well, and there is a favorite view of hers about two miles from the bridge, called by the country folks the 'Devil's Rock,' because it presents the wildest and most appalling view of the gorge."

"And possibly she has met with some trifling accident which detains her there," returned his friend, cheerfully, more to allay the rapidly increasing anxiety of his host than from any confidence he felt in his own suggestion. In truth when he caught occasional glimpses of the vast gulf, hundreds of feet below them, his heart stood still in thinking of the possible awful fate of that bright young life that had parted from them so hopefully a few hours before. For St. Johns was rather a timid man, and had an idea that women, especially young women, were like delicate chinaware, only to be entrusted to the most careful hands. The personal independence of Elsie Hastings was a thing so foreign to his mode of thinking and experience that it gave him a sort of nervous shock, much as, in another sense, he admired it. Reaching the rock from which Elsie had made her unlucky descent to procure the leaves, they soon decided that she had been there, for a parcel of ferns and leaves lay where she had deposited them on first reaching this point. This somewhat reassured Mr. Hastings, while it increased the anxiety and alarm of his companion.

"My daughter is courageous but not rash, and at the worst, I suspect she may have sprained her ankle, and so been detained. If we do not shortly find traces of her I shall conclude that something of that kind has happened, and being unable to return to us she has managed to find some means of reaching home by the wagon road, which winds round the upper head of the ravine."

"Mr. Hastings, your coolness, allow me to say, astonishes me; you are a paradox. If it was one of my girls, or even my boy, I should be wild with anxiety, while you seem to regard the disappearance of the dearest being to you in the world, with coolness and philosophy."

"My dear fellow, if I supposed there was any real danger, do you think I could be calm? But this is by no means the first time the young lady has disappeared and failed to keep her appointments."

"But would she not first send a messenger to allay your anxiety before starting for home, supposing she was so fortunate as to meet a conveyance to take her?"

"Certainly; but travellers along the upper road are rare, and it would be as easy to notify us from the head of the glen as by the way we have reached here. Her first thought would be for us, and so I can only suppose she failed to find a messenger and counted on sending one from the house, if not before."

Exploration in every direction from the rock failed to find any further traces of the missing one, and then the friend suggested that she might have gone down the face of the cliff to secure some curiosity, and not be able to return. Acting on this thought the gentlemen shouted her name until a thousand echoes answered from all parts of the ravine, but no other response.

"I dare not suppose she would be so rash as to venture down there under any pretext or temptation," said the father, with a shudder, looking over the edge of the rock into the seemingly fathomless depth below. "Let us return, for I cannot help thinking she is at home," said he, at length, "and if so we waste time here."

They reached the horses, rather weary from the exercise, and immediately mounted, Mr. Hastings having engaged a country boy they met, to ride the empty saddle. They also arranged that a brother of this lad, who lived on their

road home, should return to the natural bridge and remain there until sunset, in case the lost one should appear.

On reaching the Hermitage the gentlemen found the daughter had not been seen or heard of. Mr. Hastings led the way to his library. "Let me think awhile as to the best thing to do," said he, giving his guest a chair, and taking his own seat by the window.

Mr. St. Johns watched his host with mingled admiration and wonder.

"Externally an icicle; internally a smothered volcano," he said to himself as he watched the fine, strong face in its resolute calm, only indicating to a close observer, the struggle going on within.

"Something must have happened to my child," he said at length, starting up. "Remain here a moment while I give some orders."

"Do not leave me out, I must help in some way," said the guest.

"Thank you heartily, my friend; I shall count on you. I will return immediately."

Mr. St. Johns sat uneasily awaiting his friend's return, when something seemed to darken the window looking out on the garden to his left, and glancing quickly he saw a face pressed against the pane, and observing him closely. As St. Johns' gaze caught the other the visage was quickly withdrawn. "Who can he be?" said the gentleman, springing to the window; "the most malignant looking phiz I have seen for many a long day." No one was to be seen in the garden, and the somewhat disturbed guest resumed his seat. Mr. Hastings now entered and announced that he had organized two parties of three persons each, to proceed with lanterns and ropes to explore the vicinity of the glen, going in different directions, but to work toward the rock where the ferns were found. "We go in two wagons, and I accompany the one going round

the head of the glen. You, my friend, I must ask to remain, to send instant intelligence to us if my daughter should return, or any information be received here. A lunch awaits us in the dining-room, which we shall need as we may be up all night."

St. Johns urged to be allowed to accompany one of the search parties, but yielded to the reasoning of his host, seeing how essential it was to have some reliable person at head-quarters.

Mr. Hastings and his two wagons and men left at once, taking with them a large mastiff, a superb, strongly limbed creature, which Elsie had reared from a three months' old puppy. Her father thought the sagacity of the animal might be made available in the search. The dog was about the color and size of a Californian lion, and almost as agile and strong. On being shown a walking-dress of his young mistress he smelled at it and leaped and frisked about, as if he fully understood all that was expected of him.

Mr. St. Johns remained in the library awhile, after the departure of the others, and tried to read ; but feeling listless, and unable to fix his attention on the volume, concluded to take a stroll in the garden, into which the library window led, being on the same level. It was bright moonlight, only obscured now and then by a wandering cloud which passed across the bright face of the Queen of Night. After walking up and down a few times, the night being quite mild for the season, he seated himself on the fancifully twisted rustic seat at the bottom of the garden.

Tired, mentally and physically, he soon became oblivious of surroundings. How long he slept he knew not, but awaked suddenly, shivering with cold, and with a somewhat confused memory of a hideous dream, in which he saw Elsie Hastings falling down from the table-rock, down—down—down—then a blank. And he also had a confused recollection of seeing in his dream a human body, or what

appeared like a body, being carried somewhere into the darkness. He shuddered at the thought suggested; but somehow this fragmentary sleep-vision reassured him, and for some inexplicable reason, instead of increasing, rather lessened his anxiety. Perhaps it was, as he afterward explained, because just as dreamland dissolved into waking fact of moonlight, and garden, and the physical sensation of cold, a face of cheerful expression floated swiftly across the margin of half-consciousness and vanished. Returning to the library, the lawyer found the housekeeper, Mrs. Wagram, lamenting bitterly.

"What has happened?" he cried, fearfully; "has anything been heard of Miss Hastings?"

"Ah, non, Meester Johns, but look at Meester Hasting's lockup, all tore open, and all the things gone," and here she cried as if her heart would break.

Yes, the private drawer in the secretary was open, and contained nothing but a few papers. The deed had been adroitly done, and quickly too, for the gentleman on looking at his watch found he had only been absent about an hour. Nothing else apparently had been disturbed. The drawer was a strong one, and closed with a spring, and showed that considerable force had been used in opening it. A peculiar-shaped jimmy with the Sheffield stamp on it was the only evidence of the visit apart from the rifled drawer.

"Did Mr. Hastings keep anything very valuable there?" he asked the housekeeper, who sat moaning and crying on the sofa, and then added quickly, "but of course you don't know."

"O, oui, monsieur, papers, and money, and quelque chose."

"Can you think of anybody likely to do this? This has been done by someone who knows the house, for nothing else has been touched but this one drawer."

"Non, monsieur, I cannot tell. The bad man from New York, no doubt."

In Mrs. Wagram's opinion all evil things and persons found lodgement in the great American metropolis, from which they issued to injure and destroy, and then returned to the city den with the proceeds of the raid. Having lived there for some years she claimed to have personal knowledge on the subject, and indeed sometimes astonished her hearers by the intimate acquaintance she showed with what is commonly called the shady part of city life.

"Well, we can do nothing until Mr. Hastings returns. There has been no word since they left?"

"O, no, no! Ma pauvre enfant—my poor child. Perdu, perdu!" and here the susceptible Frenchwoman, finding anew the old channel for her grief, from which the stream had been temporarily diverted by the fact of the robbery, wept and wailed piteously. Her companion tried to console her, but felt so utterly miserable himself that he was not surprised that the lady saw through the thin vail of intention and responded: "Oui, monsieur, I know you feel bad, but courage, monsieur, the lovely child will, Dieu merci, come back all right."

Forgetting her previous despair, and quite unconscious of how inconsistent it must seem to St. Johns, the good-hearted housekeeper now talked volubly of her young lady's return. For she knew the Holy Virgin would never let any evil happen to so good a daughter and so charming a mademoiselle. And she stirred up the smouldering grate fire and made the room look bright and cheerful. Just at this moment the rapid hoofs of a galloping horse were heard crunching the gravel outside, and a strong voice shouted for somebody to come. The inmates of the library rushed into the hall, filled with excitement, and on the housekeeper opening the door, the horseman threw some-

thing white on the steps, saying, "A note for Mr. Hastings," and at once turned his horse's head and rode swiftly away.

"Oh, Meester St. Johns, this is of my young lady—read —read—" and saying something in her native tongue unintelligible to her companion, she handed him the letter eagerly.

"It is addressed to 'Mr. Hastings or friends,' and is not sealed, so I am justified in reading it, I suppose, at such a time as this," said the conscientious business man, holding the opened sheet so as to receive the rays of the hall lamp.

It was written in a cramped, trembling hand, and was as follows :

"MR. HASTINGS : Your daughter is safe and in the hands of friends. She met with an accident, but will soon be recovered and able to go home. Do not try to find her, as it will be useless. Rest quietly and she will come to you."

There was no signature, and the writing seemed to be that of an aged person, and again Mr. St. Johns thought of the face in his dream. Now, we would not have the reader suppose that this man of law was a sentimentalist or dreamer in the ordinary acceptation of the word. He was a practical matter-of-fact man of the world ; and yet there was in his nature a well of poetic thought, of which his friends, and family, and indeed he himself, were unconscious. How many such springs there doubtless are in the dry desert of business life, which circumstances have choked up and prevented coming to the surface, causing an arid expanse where otherwise there might have been oases of fertility and beauty. Why should humanity so often bargain the finer impulses, nobler ambitions, and truer instinct with all the higher possibilities of life, for the golden sands of the desert—for the fierce glare of the tropic sun of self-seeking ambition, the withering sirocco of passion, or the alternate flush and chill of pleasure's fever? There was

a something which St. Johns felt he had missed in his life, something which would, he felt assured, have made that life sweeter and larger, and yet he could give it no name. He felt sometimes, as others have felt, that there were certain channels of his being which had not been opened up at all. Channels of thought, or ways leading possibly into celestial regions, which had been choked up, or hedged up, before he had fairly entered them.

"Will there be a future time in which these lost trails will be refound, these obstructed ways reopened, so that I shall be free to enter on and pursue them?" he often asked himself.

But, while we have been thus digressing, the subject of our attention has been working. A messenger has been sent off on horseback to inform Mr. Hastings of his daughter's probable safety, as she had been indirectly heard from. This was hastily pencilled on a sheet of paper, the legal caution deciding not to risk sending the original, as it might serve as a clew in case of subsequent complications.

We will now return to the search-party led by the anxious father. The Devil's Rock was reached without any tidings of the missing one, although repeated inquiries were made along the route. It was after ten o'clock when they arrived at the place of rendezvous, but the other division of the company had not yet reached there. Immediately the torches were lighted, and a thorough search in all directions was made through the surrounding brush. The wagon road ran west of the rock about one-fourth of a mile distant, and between that and the ravine every obscure place was illumined by the torches, and scrutinized by anxious eyes. After some two hours' hard work the explorers returned to the rock weary and dejected, to find the other band of searchers arrived, having been equally unsuccessful in their attempts to find trace of the wan-

derer between that point and the bridge. Their number had been increased by one, a rather quaint individual who lived near the ravine and supported himself and wife by hunting and trapping. He was of Yankee stock, and was noted for his independent character and strong individuality. Having been much thrown with some families of the Society of Friends he had partly adopted the plain language, rarely addressing or speaking of anyone of his own sex except by the first name. Hiram Zadoks paid deference to no one, and bluntly spoke his mind on nearly all occasions. But he was said to be shrewd and sagacious, and had the reputation of being strong as a bear and entirely fearless. He was seemingly turned fifty, tall and gaunt, about six feet four inches in height, with a very long, thin face surmounted by an old white soft hat. He rarely wore any coat, and his pantaloons just reached the tops of his cowhide boots. Altogether he was a unique-looking figure. But perhaps the first thing to attract the attention of the observer was the extraordinary length of his neck. The man had the appearance of having on some occasion raised his head up to look at something distant, the neck yielding, rubber-like, to the effort, and that, somehow, the head had become fixed up there and never was able again to come down to the level of ordinary mortals. Glancing up at him suddenly, you felt as if he was looking down at you from a second-story gable window. "That scarecrow, Hiram," the country folks called him, but Miss Hastings, with whom he was a great favorite, called him the "Giraffe," which title had been adopted by polite lips in alluding to him. He knew, and was known by everybody, and was generally liked.

"Darn my butes, friend Alf, but this riles me considerable; the finest gal in this kintry, but I'll find her ef I hev to go to the bottom of that tarnation hole myself."

Mr. Hastings cordially but silently pressed the huge

hand extended to him by the speaker, and then in a husky voice said:

"Hiram, I'm afraid she——" his voice failed him, and he finished what he had started to say by pointing significantly at the hideous abyss below them.

"Yaas," said the other, slowly, "but I'll bet my best trap that she'll turn up all right yet; she was too keerful to——" and here the speaker threw himself flat on his face on the rock and peered long and steadily down into the darkness below. His hunter's eye, trained in looking into obscurity, presently detected something, and with the words "Du tell" he sprang to his feet and immediately tied the end of one of the ropes securely around his waist. All crowded about him eager to know what he meant.

"Jest thee fellars hist me deoun thar, an' be lively abeout it too, an' I'll maybe hev suthin' to tell yer on cooming up; leastwise ef the darned string doan't giv out or thee let go."

Several of the men tried to pierce the dense gloom below, but failed to see anything whatever on which to build hopes; all was darkness, profundity, and impenetrable obscurity. But they well knew the Giraffe had wonderful powers of sight and hearing, and so were disposed to trust his instinct, or sensual perception, whichever it might be, especially as all traces of the missing one led to this rock and then were lost. Even Leo, the mastiff, was at fault here and prowled impatiently around. The men let the trapper cautiously down, having first taken a turn round a tree near at hand.

"Don't take any chances of your life, Hiram," said Mr. Hastings. "I cannot for a moment bring myself to think of my child falling over here, she was too sure-footed; but I would much rather go myself than allow you, if there is any special danger."

"Nice job thee'd make deoun thar, friend Alf," sung up Hiram from the darkness below, for he had swung himself

off when Mr. Hastings began speaking and was already lost in the gloom. After letting out about two hundred feet of the rope the strain on it suddenly ceased, and the holders knew that the "Giraffe" had reached support of some kind.

"It was mighty good fortin' to bring so much of rope with us. Three hundred feet, I should guess," remarked one of the men.

"Yes," replied James Martin, a swarthy athletic-looking young man, who was employed as coachman and head man generally about the Hermitage. "I looked out for that, and went over and borrowed the new coil that John got lately for Mr. Willowby."

Presently the group on the rock heard in the intense stillness of the night some quick, sharp sounds of either anger or pain, or both, and then a series of snarling growls. They bent over and listened intently. There was evidently a commotion of some kind below, but so far down that it was impossible to determine what it might be.

"I'm afraid the brave fellow is in danger of some kind," said Mr. Hastings.

"Trust old scarecrow to take care of himself anywhere and everywhere," remarked the man nearest to him.

"Yes," returned another, "he don't fear nothing," and here he was proceeding to tell of some wonderful bit of endurance and courage on the part of the "Giraffe," when the noise below suddenly ceased, and the rope was jerked fiercely, the signal agreed on, and the men began to pull up with a will. It was slow work, for there was danger of cutting the rope against the projecting points and edges of rock if pulled too rapidly. Presently Hiram's voice was heard.

"Be kearful thar, or thee'll hurt the baby, haw, haw, haw! I guess you fellers tho't I'd feound the black boy adeoun thar," and here the speaker was seen emerging from the Cimmerian darkness in which he had been engulfed.

A spontaneous burst of astonishment saluted his appear-

ance. His hat was gone, the long black hair scattered in all directions, and his face hardly recognizable for the blood which covered it, his shirt was in fragments, but despite appearances the man was there seemingly as vigorous as ever. His left hand clutched the rope, while the right was firmly clasped round the throat of an enormous catamount. Hiram dashed the animal on the rock.

"Darn my butes, friend Alf, but I kind o' tho't the old boy had come for yours trooly, when that fellar tackeled me adeoun thar. I felt kind o' weak abeout tha jints when he tuk holt; acted as if he'd kinder come to stay. Humsoever, I kind o' gethered myself together, an' seys I, 'Hiram, don't thee be a durned fool; this b'ain't the feller the parsons preach 'bout, cos that feller's got no claws, an' this critter hes,' says I. 'This is a cat, thee bet thy butes; an' Hiram don't give in to no cat, not ef he knows hisself, an' maybe he does.' Meanwhile I was a kinder feelin' for the durned critter's necktye, to get a holt. An' durn his pictur, he was playing kinder lively with his eye-openers onto my looking-glass. 'Darn thy shoemaker an' thy dentist,' says I, an' thin I jest got my feelers 'bout the critter's swaller, an jerked the rope."

During this extraordinary recital of his sanguinary struggle, the trapper went through a series of ludicrous twists and movements intended to illustrate his story. The poor fellow was severely scratched and bitten, and only his courage and strength had saved him. His wounds were temporarily attended to, and a horse-blanket was wrapped around him in spite of his remonstrances.

"Durn my pictur', does thee think I'm a womankind?"

But here something suddenly crossed his memory, and his voice became husky, as he took from his boot a glove, and held it toward Mr. Hastings.

"Friend Alf, I picked up this 'ere fist-toggery, an' kinder think"—but the honest fellow could go no further.

He could not tell that father all he dreaded. His quick eye had detected the fresh surface left by the land slide, and this tempted him to the adventure, which might have terminated so tragically for himself. He had, with his marvellous visual power, for he refused to take a torch or lantern, traced the slide until it was arrested, then found the glove and other evidences of some one having been there, and immediately after was attacked by the cat. But he was much puzzled to account satisfactorily to himself for Elsie's disappearance; for if, as he doubted not, she had gone down with the slide, why was she not there now, for it was broad enough to hold her, and had certainly been trampled by human feet.

A deep silence fell upon the party, and for some seconds no one moved. The father seemed paralyzed by the blow, for the glove admitted only one explanation. He had had such absolute trust in his child's skill, agility, and prudence, that, until now, he had been the most hopeful of the party. But he was not a man to remain inactive long, and was first to break the silence. The voice was very low and thin, as if spoken with effort.

"It is useless, my friends, staying here. This brave man has partly, at least, solved the problem for us. We will return home and obtain such rest as we may, and to-morrow try and get to the bottom of the gorge."

The wagons were at once got ready, and the horses' heads turned homeward. Hiram was to go home with them, as Mr. Hastings insisted, to have his wounds dressed, and also, as his counsel in regard to the proposed work of to-morrow would be invaluable, even if incapacitated from taking part himself. Being near daybreak, almost five o'clock, few of them really expected to obtain any sleep more than might be snatched in the home drive.

Suddenly, as they were just starting off, Hiram burst out with, "Durn my butes, but there's a critter comin' this way,

all kicketty-whoop." Each one tried to listen, but although the night was unusually quiet, not a sound could any one else hear. "An' he's got a man atop on him too, and he's just acoming for all git out," persisted the Giraffe.

"It may be some one seeking us," said Mr. Hastings, at length, while a gleam of hope seemed to light his face, and as suddenly died away again.

"Let us remain where we are for a few moments," directed he.

Now, some of the others declared they could detect a horse's galloping feet, and soon all heard, and in a brief time the sound seemed to leave the road above and come toward them.

"Is Mr. Hastings here?" shouted the rider, emerging from the darkness like a messenger from another sphere, "I've a paper for him."

"Ah, Will, is it you?" said that gentleman, as he hastily seized the paper. He appeared to glance quickly over its contents by the flickering light of the torch held for him by one of the men, and then the paper fell from his nerveless grasp, and he was seen to stagger, and would have fallen, only for the ready hands which caught him.

"Lay 'im on his back. He's only kinder wilted. Durn my butes, but I'm kinder sorter myself," chimed in the Scarecrow.

"I feel ashamed of myself, but the revulsion was too much. I'm all right now," said the proprietor of the Hermitage, sitting up. "Well, my friends, this paper tells me that my daughter has been heard from, and is safe. Thank God for it," he added, reverently.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Hiram, and presently a shout arose which vibrated on the night air like a gunpowder explosion.

Rapid time was made in reaching the Hermitage that morning, for daylight streaked the east as they entered the avenue which led to the mansion-house.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE MYSTERY.

"YES, there were some valuable papers there, and some family relics, and about one hundred dollars in money, but these losses are very trivial to me at the present moment," remarked the owner of the Hermitage, when informed by his friend of the robbery. "Strange that Elsie does not send us further word, or else come herself," he continued, glancing at the clock on the mantel, which showed 4 P.M. of the day following the incidents mentioned in the last chapter.

"Have you any suspicion of where she may be?" inquired St. Johns.

"None whatever. Elsie has acquaintances and friends all over the country and among all classes. My opinion is, that falling over the cliff she was caught about the place Hiram found the glove, and that her cries attracted notice from some passer-by, who succeeded in rescuing her from her perilous position, and some of these people near the glen are wonderfully expert in dealing with accidents of this nature. And it is probable that she was temporarily injured—a sprained ankle or something of that sort—and is now at one of the cottages."

"But why should she not at once notify you of her whereabouts?" said his companion.

"I don't know ; that is the mystery which enshrouds this thing," said Mr. Hastings, bluntly, turning toward the window to hide his feeling of vexation.

About 8 P.M. a note was found on the library floor, evi-

dently thrown there while the gentlemen were at dinner. It was in Elsie's handwriting, and read as follows :

"DEAR FATHER : Do not be anxious about me, I am safe and well with the exception of a sprained ankle. I am with kind friends, but circumstances forbid my leaving here or disclosing my retreat for the present. You can trust me, father, for you know me too well to doubt me. I met with a terrible fall and was insensible for some time, how long I do not know, and was wonderfully saved. Ever your loving child. ELSIE."

"Nothing for it but patience, I suppose ; read that St. Johns, and suggest what you think had better be done."

"If she is detained against her will and has penned that under compulsion, the sooner something is done the better," said the lawyer, handing back the note.

"Perhaps that wild fellow you were telling me about could advise us ; his class is often equal to an emergency of this kind when more cultivated brains fail. It is largely a question of knowledge of locality, as she is evidently not far off."

"A good thought. I will call him up," touching the bell. "Mary, please tell Hiram I want to see him a moment, that is," he added, "poor fellow, if he is able to be up after such a terrible experience."

"O, yes sir, he's up some time ago, and is now getting ready to go home."

In a few moments a strong knock was heard at the door, and in walked the "Scarecrow."

"Well, Hiram my poor fellow, how are you to-day?" said Mr. Hastings, kindly, giving him his hand.

"Wall, Squire, I feel kinder twisted up, sorter I'd been drawed through a fuz bush. Ha, ha! Didn't she go fur me, I guess? But it'd take mor'n one cat to get away with the 'Giraffe.' Ha, ha!"

One peculiarity of the trapper was that he was as proud of this title, as a blue-blooded scion of European aristocracy

might be of the title of 'lord,' or an American of 'general' —because it had been given him by Elsie Hastings, who held first place in Hiram's estimation.

"A most singular creature," said the city man to himself, regarding him curiously.

Strange and weird looking always, the "Scarecrow" certainly merited the title on this occasion. Martin had loaned him a shirt and jacket, which being much too small for him only seemed to bring out the grotesqueness of his figure, and his great length of limb and neck. His face was almost covered with strips of black plaster, hiding the furrows made by the cruel talons of the cat. But it was evident, in spite of his confident bearing, that the brave fellow was feeling the effects of his experience, and needed more rest.

"Hiram, I sent for you because I heard you were up. But you really ought to be in bed. This is my friend Mr. St. Johns."

"Put it thar," said the trapper, extending an enormous hand, in which he fairly covered up the small one of the lawyer, giving it a squeeze which made him wince and nurse the abused member for some moments. "Ony friend of Alf' Hastings, is friend o' mine. Has thee heard of the young woman, friend Alf? Ony news mor'n ther gotten by the rock?"

"Yes, and that's what I want to talk with you about. My daughter writes me herself this time, to say she is laid up with a sprained ankle, and is with friends, but she does not, and evidently is not permitted to give the names of those she is with."

"Du tell, friend Alf; 'pears to me kinder odd like," and here Hiram dropped into a chair and seemed to be lost in thought.

"Suthin's got to be done, an' Hiram's the boy to do it," he exclaimed at length, as if debating with himself. "The

auld critter; durn my butes, Hiram, thee's been a dreaming."

"Have you any idea of where Elsie is?" said Mr. Hastings, quietly. "You have known her from the time she was a child, and now I want you to help me find her, because she may be detained against her will somewhere."

"Know her, know Elsie Hastings—durn my butes, friend John," looking in a friendly way toward the lawyer, "I've known that gal sence she was knee high to a bumble bee. Ha! ha!" And here the honest fellow laughed quietly to himself, "Durn em, ef I didn't teach her all she knows—birds, nests, fleowers; way up the Big Hole, hosses. Ha! ha! I've tooken her on these sholers mile an' mile, rain an' shine. Know little Elsie! I should think I did."

"Well, my friend, with your help I think we can find her. Suppose you go and get some sleep and rest, and tomorrow morning we'll start."

"No," said the woodsman firmly, "friend Alf, thou must stay here," and then thinking he had perhaps hurt the father's feelings, he added, "leastwise the morn'll show what's best."

"All right, Hiram, good-night."

On inquiring for Hiram at breakfast next morning, the report came that he had departed long before it was light, and had left a piece of a shingle on which Mr. Hastings with some difficulty made out the words, "Friend Alf, good-by. The best dugs don't allers hunt in company. Here from yours truly, soon. Hiram."

"What does the fellow mean, Mr. Hastings? Do you suppose he is to be trusted?"

"I would risk my life with him, St. Johns; but he is as eccentric as he is honest and brave, and that is saying much."

"But do you imagine he has any idea of where Elsie is? He certainly acted as if he did last night."

"You cannot tell anything about him, he is as cunning

as the animals he traps, but I suspect he has some idea which he is going to act on, and preferred to be alone," returned the host. "However, my hands are practically tied. Wherever Elsie is she is not exactly her own mistress, I know. If this were Italy, I should be sure she was a captive in the hands of banditti, who were holding her for a ransom. But no such organization exists around here that I know of. I only wish she was home safely."

The guest noticed how worn and anxious his host looked, having evidently slept but little if any since the disappearance of his child.

"But in my own selfish anxiety I came near forgetting that Mrs. St. Johns and the girls are to be here to-day. I must give some directions about the carriage meeting them at the depot," suddenly remarked Mr. Hastings.

"Thanks, but do not let this be a burden on you; they can easily find a conveyance. In relation to Elsie, however, let me make a suggestion. May I send to New York for a couple of sharp detectives that I know of? Possibly they may be able to bring this matter to a crisis."

"No, I thank you, St. Johns, at least not at present, for she may be acting entirely of her own free will in this matter, and I would not for the world manifest suspicion toward those to whom I may be under immense obligation for saving her life."

"Yes, but I can't for the life of me see the kindness or sense of keeping an injured girl away from home, where she could be so much better nursed. Let me send for the officers."

"Not yet; we will wait a little and see what Hiram may do, and then, Elsie may write again. If they were not friendly she could not have written at all; we must not forget that. I will go and order the carriage, and as it is fine suppose we go and meet the ladies?"

"That'll suit me exactly," returned his companion, as Mr. Hastings left the room.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CITY FOLKS.

"Mr. St. Johns, please come into the hall, sir, Mr. Hastings wants to speak to you."

"Why, St. Johns, we shan't have our ride after all, here's your wife and daughters coming up the avenue."

Presently the carriage stopped at the hall door, and a rather foppish-looking young man sprang down from beside the coachman and shook hands heartily with the two gentlemen who stood waiting to receive the guests.

"Deah me, how fortunate to find you both at home. Mamma said she was sure you would be out somewhere."

"Why, Ruskin, how well you look, and Mr. Hastings too; why we haven't met for an age. You remember 'Angelina' and 'Alfarina,' do you not? Not so 'comme il faut' as one could wish, but we are travellers, you know."

The good lady fairly beamed on her host and led the way into the house with Mr. Hastings, while the girls followed demurely with their father and brother. The elder, Angelina, led a small pug dog by a pretty blue ribbon fastened to a fancy brass collar.

"Well, pa, we did take an earlier train than we expected, for Angie had thought perhaps Napoleon would stand the fatigue of the journey better in the morning."

"What a fib, Roland. Don't you mind him, father, he's always poking fun at 'Napy,' isn't he, dear?"

"Where is Elsie? I can't rest till I've seen the dear girl. What a perfect treasure she is. I feel a mother's interest in her, and with your permission will carry her off to town

some of these days. Mademoiselle has such a very fine assortment this season."

Mr. Hastings' brow clouded a little as he answered gravely, "I am really glad that you take so much interest in my motherless girl, but she is not home at present; an accident, a rather singular experience detains her, which Mr. St. Johns will explain to you while I give some directions about your rooms to Mrs. Wagram."

Two tall, handsome girls were the Misses St. Johns. Angelina, a blonde, with regular features and oval face, would have passed almost any ordeal of criticism and been pronounced charming. Her neat gray travelling costume fitted her shapely figure exquisitely, and she walked with a grace and style that a princess or any other lady might have envied. A slight affectation of manner rather detracted from the first impression generally produced on seeing her, but in spite of this she was a favorite in society and almost worshipped at home. Alfarina was somewhat shorter than her sister, though still about the average height of women, a brunette, with good features, but rarely or ever attracting much comment when Angelina was near. Fond of society, but being less sought after than "Angie," the home name of the elder, Alfarina St. Johns was much more domestic in her tastes, and devoted to her father, for whom she frequently acted as amanuensis. Under different influences she would have made a sensible, affectionate girl, but the fashion-loving mother had gradually moulded her to the ideal which was enshrined in Madame Grundy's temple until the true nature was so obscured that few knew or suspected that she was capable of aught else than the butterfly life she led. Her father was one of these few, and Elsie Hastings was another.

"If any serious misfortune should overtake me, Alf is the only one I could depend on in my own family," St. Johns said to his friends on one occasion.

Mrs. St. Johns was much shocked to hear of the recent events, and Elsie's disappearance.

"The dear child! She was always so venturesome, you know, Mr. Hastings," looking at her host somewhat reproachfully. "I always warned you that something would happen if that darling girl was allowed to run around the country by herself. Excuse me for speaking so plainly, but young ladies, in my opinion, should rarely venture out alone, even for half an hour. It is un—un——"

"Unladylike," suggested Mr. Hastings, smiling. "I know you must think so, but I should have had a fine time if I had made that rule with Elsie. No, I determined she should grow up naturally and unfettered, excepting the restraints necessary for right guidance, and so far, I think she has justified my judgment."

"Yes, my dear sir, but only see what it has come to!" and here the good lady raised the scented cambric to her eyes.

The truth was, Mrs. St. Johns had long wished for some opportunity to impress her friend with the falsity of his theories concerning female education, and the time seemed to have finally arrived, and she was not quite generous enough to avoid taking advantage of it. Really fond of Elsie, she longed to introduce her to the fashionable world, clad in all the finery which the mademoiselle's deft fingers know so well how to fabricate. Elsie's bright ways, springy, active movements, and splendid health were regarded by the matron as being of little worth—sadly unfashionable and even rustic. The languid air, stately slow step, and pale complexion of her daughters, were considered as being much more desirable in the eyes of this foolish mother than the fine physical vigor of the country maiden. Elsie painted beautifully, sketching from nature, but of instrumental music she knew little. Having no taste for the piano, her father early determined that she should

never waste time and strength by practising four or five hours a day at what was useless to her, and would inevitably be abandoned when she became her own mistress.

"Piano practice is one of the means by which bodily health is seriously impaired, the intellect dulled, and precious time worse than wasted, in scores of families. We see the fruits daily of this baleful custom of compelling those who have no musical ability to spend thus the fleeting hours of their invaluable spring-time. But still the immolation of the victims goes on. Mere mechanical music, mere instrumental playing, without soul in it, is torture to the hearer, and weariness to the performer, and in eight out of ten cases the music we hear is precisely this, and nothing more. Ability to produce natural music or singing is presumptive evidence that there is a basis for a musical education, but, if this is absent, I should hesitate very seriously about permitting a child of mine to study music at all, supposing she earnestly desired it herself, otherwise decidedly not. But I would have all children taught to sing, if possible, so soon as they can articulate."

This was Mr. Hastings' answer in part to a letter received some years before from Mrs. St. Johns urging him to send Elsie to the city school for the musical advantages. The lady was amazed at such heterodoxy and used to show the letter in confidence to her lady friends as a natural curiosity.

"To think of anyone in this civilized country, and in this advanced age of the world, entertaining such views."

"Poor girl, what is to become of her with such a father?" were the ordinary comments.

"Why," said Mrs. Euphrasia Landis, of Landis Place, "when my Minetta told me she did not care about studying music, I said at once, 'never let me hear that again, or off you go to boarding-school.' I employed Signor Thérry, and made her practise four hours a day, and I flatter myself

few girls of her age excel her." But the pale face, stooping, round shoulders, and languid air of the coerced musician, told in eloquent words the price paid for the useless accomplishment.

"My daughter's music for ten years," said a pompous father one day to Mr. Hastings, "cost me just $5,000."

Mr. Hastings, who knew the girl detested the piano, could not help replying, "And cost her ten thousand unhappy hours, I'll be bound. Surely such a price in money and suffering is too much to pay for any accomplishment on earth."

The visitors soon made themselves at home, for the house was large, roomy, and delightfully located, and Mr. Hastings was a model host. The only drawback was the absence of Elsie, which kept all in a state of half-nervous expectancy. Mr. St. Johns still urged sending for a city detective, and in this was supported by his whole family. Roland St. Johns, who has been rather ignored so far, especially insisted on it.

"Really, my deah Mr. Hastings, you ought to yield to father in this, for he is a lawyer, you know, and understands the way of these—aw wretches. And to think of your beautiful daughter being detained by those scamps, whoever they are, is enough to make me turn detective myself, aw." Saying which the young man appeared so warlike that his mother regarded him admiringly, remarking :

"You look just like your grand-uncle, the Admiral. Doesn't he Ruskin?" While the younger sister laughed merrily.

"O yes, Roland, but I think you would do better to detect a pretty girl in a ball-room than in a hiding-place in these mountains. Besides, it might be dangerous, you know;" and here she imitated the affected mincing tone of the youth to his great disgust.

"Well, mamma, you know Roland is no more fit for such

work than I am, and it sounds so droll to hear him talk in that bombastic style," she responded to her mother's displeased look.

"I am sure your brother is as brave as a lion if he was only tried, and indeed I hope he never will be."

"But, mamma, what's the use of courage if one never uses it? Besides, one cannot be sure of possessing it," persisted Alf.

Finally, as nothing more was heard of or from Elsie, and a week had now elapsed, Mr. Hastings almost decided to allow St. Johns to send to the city for his officers.

"We will delay until noon, and if nothing contra-indicates in the interval you can order your detectives here at once."

"Do, Mr. Hastings, allow me to write now. Where is the use of longer delay and running greater risk? Every day that passes but complicates the case."

"That appears reasonable, but I wish to send a messenger to Hiram's cottage to ascertain if he has been home since leaving here. I still have some hopes in that direction."

"Pray don't tell that queer fish anything about sending for detectives," urged the lawyer in evident alarm.

"Oh, no, I promise you that, unless the officers themselves agree to it."

## CHAPTER V.

### "A NEW WORLD."

We will now return to the object of the anxiety which more or less possessed the inmates of the Hermitage. We will try to follow the fortunes of the young lady who in falling into the Great Ravine has also in a certain sense fallen out of our narrative. When Elsie awoke to consciousness, before moving or opening her eyes, she lay for some moments in a sort of lethargic condition, as people often do under such circumstances, trying to recall the past, and realize what had happened. Presently, in a confused way, the events of the morning came to her. The parting with her father and Mr. St. Johns, the ramble along the brow of the ravine, the descent from the flat rock to get the ferns, the giving way of the ground, and the blankness and vacancy which followed. And now where was she? Was she at the bottom of the ravine, or had somebody found her and taken her home. Was her father wildly searching for her, or had he not yet missed her? How long since this happened? These thoughts rapidly coursed through her brain, and she almost dreaded to open her eyes. Wherever she was, however, her instinct told her that the light which came to her through the closed lids, was not sunlight; it was artificial light. She felt sure, then, she was in some dwelling. Yet she feared to open her eyes. Sensation returned slowly, and she realized that she was lying on some kind of couch. By a great effort, for she seemed to herself at first as if she could not move at all, she grasped the sub-

stance on which her hand lay, and felt that it was soft to the touch, but furry, like an animal. She shuddered, and drew back the hand by a convulsive effort. What if she should be still in the ravine, and this some wild animal which had crept alongside of her for warmth? Then she remembered the light, but was afraid to move a limb. An undefined fear possessed her; perhaps her fall had paralyzed her, and she would be a hapless, helpless cripple for life. Something warm touched her hand, and a voice which seemed very small, something like a doll's voice, she thought, said:

"Open your eyes, my daughter; fear nothing, you are among friends."

A great revulsion of feeling took place, the blood seemed to surge tumultuously through her whole being—the lethargy gave way, and she opened her eyes. The light blinded her, and she quickly closed them again. She felt like a prisoner who, by one superlative effort, has disrupted ten thousand delicate bands which held from liberty. Like a bird which has just freed itself from the entangling meshes of a net, and yet, being temporarily exhausted by the effort, falls back again amid the broken threads of its prison-house, seemingly helpless as before, but with this glorious consciousness of difference—'The door is now open, the way free to life and liberty.' Elsie felt no longer in that dreadful bondage of negative condition, uncertainty, and doubt. The voice and resulting effort on her part in response had made her once more a citizen of life's commonwealth, and had scattered wide the doleful, half-formed apprehensions which, like black, evil-eyed spirits, had flown athwart the dim twilight of her awakening.

"How like," she thought, for her mind now began to act vividly, "is my condition to that of some poor soul plunged in the darkness and bondage of ignorance, despair, or perplexity, which hears, not audibly in a physical sense, per-

haps, but somehow, in the silences of the soul, the still small voice of guidance, at whose electric tones obscurity clears into brightness and noon of night becomes noon of day. The labyrinth opens, the paths broaden, and it presses onward, with bounding, elastic tread, into the unknown but now trusted future."

Some of our experiences cannot be measured by time. Seconds have the import and meaning of months, and scores of ordinary life-atmospheres seem to be, by some mysterious alchemic process in the secret laboratory of the spirit, compressed into the fleeting breath of a moment. Our being seems to be filled and expanded with celestial oxygen, giving an exhilaration which is a foretaste of paradise. Such was the almost ecstatic state in which this high-strung but thoroughly healthy nature found herself now. It was the border-land, the medium country, which, though lighted by Heaven, is still Earth. Dear Mother Earth! It is something to find, after a perilous trial in which we have almost touched the "somewhere" of our often musings, that we are still with thee, on thee, and of thee. Dear Mother Earth! With all thy trials, disappointments, vexations, shortcomings, sorrows, and bereavements, we love thee still, and perhaps best when near leaving thee. Elsie felt as if the coin of her nature, of her spirit-life, had been sent to the mint and been restamped, and in a sense was brightened and renewed—again to pass into the same old currency of life, but not by any means the same old coin. She was conscious that she had received an impress, that she had gone forward, as it were, and gained a maturity of mental and spiritual experience at a bound. Had been, so to speak, promoted high up, without passing through the intermediate grades. She had been face to face with Death, and the cold shadow of the pinion of the King of Terrors, had chilled her so that the returning warmth of life's sunshine was sufficient to thrill her with happiness

which she could neither define nor grasp, only feel it and live in it.

Again that dread of breaking the spell, of facing reality, came over her. O that she could stay thus forever! Could Heaven give more? Suddenly strains of delicious music filled the air, and her half-awakened senses merged themselves in enraptured listening. Calm, quiescent, still, yet intensely receptive, she was unconscious of aught but the floods of harmony which rolled in plaintive waves over her soul. Now tender and pathetic as a mother's lullaby, very near; then far off, as the stately swell of a rhythmic ocean stealing with measured steps upon a distant shore. The sounds ceased; and, obeying an impulse which could not be resisted, she murmured, startled at the sound of her own voice, as if another owned and used it, "Play, O play that once more, and then I can willingly die."

"Not die, but live, my daughter," said the voice she had heard before. "It shall be as you wish." And again melody held her captive. As the final strains lost themselves to her the voice came again, and now she noticed its quality, soft and subdued, giving her confidence.

"Come back, my child, to life and friends. All is well!" And at the same moment a hand was passed lightly over her head, and at once all doubt, confusion, and languor disappeared, and she opened her eyes wide and looked up. Her glance rested at once on the finest and most expressive face she thought she had ever seen. It was an aged face, for it was framed in snow-white hair and beard, the latter reaching to the waist. But the eyes were black as coal and keenly bright; the whole expression was humane and benevolent in a marked degree. Smiling winningly, the owner of the face clasped her hand kindly, saying:

"Do not trouble yourself, my daughter, to ask any questions now. I will go and bring you some needful food, and when you have gathered strength I will tell you all." Say-

ing which, he quietly lifted a curtain near her couch and passed out of sight.

She raised herself up, with a little difficulty, into a sitting posture and quietly surveyed the room. It was a singular-looking apartment of a very peculiar shape, or rather having no special shape. It was quite extensive, and there seemed to be no doors, only curtains were hung around the walls, and large handsome skins of wild and tame animals. An immense open fireplace occupied one end of the chamber, and the bright wood-fire looked cheery and homelike. The couch on which she rested was formed entirely of soft skins, and she smiled at the vague terror which had beset her bewildered mind, a short time since, when she had grasped the fur. The furniture was as singular as the room. A long handsome table, of different kinds of wood and with singularly twisted legs, rested at the side of the room, opposite her couch. A number of very cosy-looking chairs, fantastically carved and having gnarled and twisted legs, like the table, were scattered about, all of them being cushioned with skins. Everything wore an appearance of comfort and ease and softness which was soothing to the new inmate. She now looked curiously to the floor, and found it was evidently of sand and partly covered with skins. But on looking up, in a listless way, at the roof she noticed that it sparkled in the glancing firelight like a million clusters of diamonds. Long pendants of bright, glittering icicles hung from the roof. Icicles? No; but very like icicles. A wonderful roof! She had never seen anything like it. Altogether the place was totally unlike anything her previous experience had brought her in contact with, and again the question pressed upon her, "Where can I be?" She began to feel weak again, and lay down on her skin couch and closed her eyes. Presently a low breathing reached her ear, and again she looked around somewhat in vague alarm. Finally the sound led her glance to the fireplace, near which

she saw a form which before she had taken for a skin thrown loosely on the floor. She could detect a sort of movement now, and she was satisfied this was the source of the breathing. Some sort of animal she thought, and half feared to breathe lest she should awaken it. Looking fixedly, she could now notice the regular rise and fall of the deep, broad chest.

"I believe it is a dog," she said, softly, and her nervousness vanished. She had no fear of dogs; they had been her friends and companions from babyhood. Her thoughts went out to home and her own faithful Hugo, and she felt that if he had been with her things might have turned out better. "But I am safe and in good hands," she said. "I wonder if I broke any bones, anyway? I don't feel any pain," and here she moved her limbs cautiously; but a sharp twinge in the right foot made her cry out involuntarily, which brought the sleeping animal at a bound into the middle of the apartment. He was a mastiff of huge proportions, fawn-colored, with a fine intelligent head. Fixing his large, lustrous eyes full upon her in a questioning but friendly sort of way, and wagging his tail, he advanced slowly toward her and put his great jaws into her outstretched hand.

"Poor fellow, good doggie!" she said, soothingly; "it feels almost like being home again to see you."

Engaged in caressing the dog, she did not notice his master had entered the room and was gazing fondly at them both.

"If anything else had been needed to make me feel a father's interest in my young friend and patient, it would be the interest you feel in the other animals. Not lower animals, as some call them, for these devoted creatures are often superior to men—to many men certainly, and more faithful than most."

So saying, the speaker fondly stroked the docile animal,

whose eye never left his face while speaking, as if he, too, understood and agreed with what had been said.

"Go to your place, Alex!" upon which the mastiff returned at once to his rug by the fire, and, with his head between his paws, attentively watched his master. "I thought I heard your voice, my child, and as if in pain," he said, inquiringly.

"I moved my foot and it hurt me a little. Is it——" and here she paused, hesitatingly.

"I know what you would ask," he said, kindly. "No, it is not broken, but very badly sprained. You must thank the Good Spirit and your angel that no bones were broken. You had a terrible fall, but we will not talk of that now; you must have some nourishment." And again he disappeared, to return immediately bearing a small tray on which was some simple but appetizing food and milk. The tray was placed on a small table, also from the inner room. Encouraged by her kind host, Elsie found the simple fare delicious, and her hunger satisfied, she felt her old life and vigor again, and now longed for an opportunity to know how she came to her present abode, and how long she had been there, and a thousand other things—prominent among which was the intense desire to know if her father had been communicated with. One thing she felt certain of—her host was a foreigner, certainly not an American, and yet he spoke a very pure English, almost too pure for a native, contradictory as it might seem.

"Nadia will come in now, and help to make you feel more comfortable; but I am afraid she cannot answer any of your questions, as she does not speak English, so you must save the questions for me when I return," he said, smilingly.

"Not speak any English!" and making a desperate effort to overcome her reserve, she asked, impulsively, as he was raising the curtain to leave the room, "What language does she speak, then?"

He looked at her a moment fixedly, as if to notice the effect of his answer, and then said, quietly and gravely, and she thought with a slight hesitation, "Russian," and the curtain dropped, and she was again alone with Alex, the dog.

"I wonder how badly my foot is injured?" she said, audibly; and the dog pricked up his ears at her voice, and slightly wagged his tail, as if he would like to tell, but must not, and yet looking at her as if he knew all about it. Throwing aside the light, fleecy covering of exquisite snowy whiteness which lay over the lower part of the couch, she carefully moved her feet, very cautiously, and keeping them closely together, gradually she brought them to the floor. But no sooner had she done so than the sense of fulness and weight and dull pain in the right foot and ankle warned her that it was badly swollen. A light footstep and the raising of the curtain drew her attention to a small, rosy face peering at her curiously. Elsie held out her hand impulsively, and a bright little maiden of some twelve summers sprang into the room, seized the proffered hand and raised it to her lips, at the same time uttering, "Slava Bogu!" in a charming, childlike way. Elsie put her arm round the girl's neck and kissed her warmly, which seemed greatly to delight the little woman, for she chattered in a very animated way, and the accents of that strange tongue fell like music on the listener's ear, although she did not understand a word.

"Are you Nadia?" said Elsie, sounding the name as she had heard it spoken by the old man. The rosy-cheeked maiden shook her head, saying:

"No, no," very decidedly, and at that moment the individual referred to entered the room in the person of a middle-aged, pleasant-featured woman whose likeness to the girl at once declared the relationship between them.

"Slava Bogu!" said the new-comer, dropping a courtesy

to the young lady and crossing herself reverently. Elsie was much diverted at the way in which the child took her mother's hand, and in a dramatic way pointed at her, at the same time glancing at the lady, saying emphatically, "Nadia," and then touching her own breast significantly said, "Sophia," ending by saying something to the elder, and laughing merrily. It was a complete introduction, and the merriment of the youngster was so infectious that Elsie laughed too, and the mother smiled in a grave, sad way, giving at the same time a half-loving, half-reproving glance at the mirthful maiden. In spite of the painful foot the toilet was skilfully and rapidly made by the deft, tender hands of the mother and daughter, who insisted that the patient must not help herself in the least. But to a nature like Elsie's this was impossible, and her own quick fingers expedited matters not a little, so that in about twenty minutes she was sitting in a sort of easy-chair with her feet on a support, clad in clean, white garments fetched from unseen places, and feeling fresh and decidedly comfortable.

"But where am I? and who is my benefactor? Old fellow, I wish you could speak," as the dog came up to her in friendly fashion and laid one paw on the stool which supported her feet. "Oh, if I only knew this language. Why didn't I learn Russian instead of French when I went to school. But then Mademoiselle Thérry didn't know anything but French, how should she. How she would have looked if I had asked her to teach me Russian. How ridiculous, as if I ever could have supposed that I should have any use for Russian. I never dreamed there were any Russians in our part of the world."

Her mind ran on in this whimsical way, and presently she found herself smiling at her own fancies.

"However, that grand old gentleman understands English and will tell me all about it, but I must send a message to father."

A slight noise aroused her, and the old man stood before her again.

"Do not fret, my child, I heard your last words as I entered the room. Your father knows you are safe. He was notified early this morning."

"This morning! why, how long have I been asleep? and was it yesterday that I fell down the ravine?"

Drawing one of the curious chairs to hers, he sat beside her.

"We did not discover you until about seven o'clock last evening, and you have to thank Alex here that we found you then. The instinct of these beings is wonderful," and here he laid his hand upon the dog's head which was resting on his knee. He detected you and gave us no rest until we began the search. Adolph, whom you have not yet seen, has the sight of a greyhound, and the strength and courage of a panther, and soon decided that some one was lying helpless and needed prompt assistance. Without going into wearisome details, let me say that we reached you and brought you here in an insensible condition, from which you only recovered a couple of hours since."

Elsie grasped the hands of the speaker fervently. "Oh, how can I thank you, you have saved my life," and here her tears flowed freely.

"I fear I have been a little imprudent, my daughter; you are weak yet from your fearful fall. You must rest quietly now and not talk any more. Everything will be well. You trust me, my child, do you not?"

"With my life," she returned, raising his hand to her lips, "but do let me send word to my father. My dear father, he will be so dreadfully anxious. Can he not come and see me if I am too lame to be moved?" And here she regarded him wistfully.

"Suppose you write him a little note, telling him you

are safe and doing well, but that the doctor says you cannot be moved yet."

"O thank you so much, and where shall I say I am?" adding naively, "and your name, so that he can help me thank my benefactor."

"Say you are in the home of a physician who will send you to your father so soon as it is safe for you to travel."

"Are you really a doctor? and do you practice in our neighborhood? Strange that I never heard of you. At least," she added, coloring, "I mean, I thought I knew of all the physicians round here."

"I do not practise now, only for a friend occasionally. For instance, when a young lady is brought to me insensible, suffering from concussion of the brain and a sprained ankle. Then I turn doctor once more. But your father can trust me, my child, for I understand the healing art thoroughly, and kind nature offers me remedies on every hand."

So delicately evasive had been his replies that she had too much tact to press for information, which she saw was purposely withheld, so she quietly penned the note which, as we have seen, reached Mr. Hastings at his home. On finishing it, instead of asking for an envelope, as first inclined, she frankly passed it to her companion, who seemed much pleased at this mark of confidence, and handed it back saying:

"You will never regret confiding in me, my daughter. Read it to me if you like. There are matters which I cannot well explain now, but which you shall know in good time." So saying he held out his hand, which she warmly grasped, and then read the few lines she had traced.

"Very good, your father will have this within a few hours."

He was about leaving the apartment, when, observing her wistful look, he said, "Yes, my child, I promise you that

you shall know of your father's welfare soon," and left the room.

She was astonished.

"Why, he seems to read my thoughts. He is a wonderful man. This is the third time he has told me what I wished before I could frame it in words. But he is grand and noble, and I begin to love him very much. Who can he be I wonder?"

The subject of her thoughts was truly a remarkable-looking man in many respects. A very aged man apparently, for he had many of the signs of far-advanced life, and yet his step was elastic though slow. Of medium height and fairly nourished form, he gave some indications of having enjoyed uncommon physical power and endurance in his prime. But his superb head, before alluded to, with the abundance of snowy hair above and below, and the brilliant piercing black eyes gave him an appearance of dignity and authority rarely met with.

Elsie fancied he looked like an ancient king, and his bearing and manner emphasized the thought. The full beard in man always gives the impression of power, and nothing so adds to that indefinable something we call presence, like the hirsute appendage. Oh! the degeneracy of these beardless times. Shade of Vandyke! how would you mourn over the race, so many of whom, denuded by art, below, and by ruthless nature above, scud along on life's ocean literally under bare poles!

Elsie did not see her host again that night, for soon after his departure with the note, Nadia and her little daughter entered with some slight refreshment, after partaking of which she was prepared for repose and left alone, with a soothing draught by her side, which she was to take in case she could not sleep. The little maiden managed to tell her in broken English, that some one would be within call in case she wanted anything during the night.

Her head ached pretty badly, for the severe concussion of the brain which she had suffered had left that organ in a very excitable condition, and the absolute quiet she now enjoyed in that great, comfortable room, with the glowing fire sending its fitful dancing light, now in one corner, and then in another, was just what she felt she required. The intense stillness was wonderful, not a sound but the crackling of the fire reached her, and soon slumber wrapped her senses in oblivion. What a democrat, what a leveller sleep is! Prince and peasant alike, in slumber. Where is the distinction? For a third of the time wealth, rank, power, have no advantage over poverty, obscurity, weakness. In the great commonwealth of slumber all enjoy equal rights. In the republic of dreams the noble and ignoble may change places, and the beggar mount the throne of power.

"Was it a dream? How oft in sleep, we ask, Can this be true?
Whilst warm imagination paints her marvels to our view,
Earth's glory seems a tarnished crown, to that which we behold,
When dreams enchant our sight with things whose meanest garb is gold!"

And then, the awakening from a really sound, refreshing slumber—is any satisfaction on earth equal to it? You are ready to engage the world single-handed. Giants, which, a few hours previously, presented a portentious front and made us feel proportionately humble, now appear dwarfs, or at the most, inflated monsters which a properly applied pin will cause to collapse and shrink. Problems are solved, doubts disappear, and earth seems rehabilitated under the magic touch of the enchanted wand of the nocturnal king. It was undoubtedly morning, for the glorious rays of the day god were streaming into the room, tinting with golden beauty whatever they touched. But the light seemed to come from one direction, and yet she could see no window.

"What a funny house it is," she said to herself. "Who

ever saw such a ceiling, and no windows visible? But yet the light comes in, and sunlight too. What a delightful sleep I have had; if this old ankle only would get well fast, I should soon be able to go home."

And then she thought of the people she was with, and the evasive answers of the old man to her inquiries.

"Russians, for I suppose he is a Russian too. I wonder if pa knows anything of them. Well, they are very interesting, and that bright-eyed little one must know more English than she lets on. I will try and find out something from her. If no better, I suppose I must learn Russian. My, what would father say if I went home talking Russian like a Cossack?"

This thought so struck her fancy that she laughed merrily. The truth was, Elsie was naturally fond of adventure, and now that sleep had restored in great degree her lost nervous tone, she rather enjoyed the idea of trying to solve the mystery by which she was surrounded. She was just planning how she should put her questions, so as to elicit information without giving rise to suspicion—for she felt certain that there was something about these people which they did not wish her to know—when the words "Slava Bogu" saluted her ears, and Nadia, followed by the demure little maiden, glided into the room.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE "SCARECROW," AND HIS DARK LANTERN.

Inquiry at Hiram's cottage only produced the information that nothing had been seen or heard of him for two days. His wife declared this was nothing unusual, as he was frequently away on his trapping expeditions for a week at a time. She was a buxom, good-humored German, very short and stout, and an odder-looking couple could not be found on the Continent. "Plus and Minus," Mr. Hastings called them, but they seemed well adapted to each other, and lived in perfect harmony—at least so the nearest neighbors said, who lived about a mile off.

"Dat is one wonderful man," said Mrs. Hiram; "me tell him he never be lost. Dot man so high he not hide himself. His head stick up somewhere." And here the good lady laughed all over, until the jubilant waves of her ample person trembled and quivered like a mountain of blanc-mange.

The master of Hermitage decided to take no special step, beyond making rigid inquiry everywhere for miles round, until he saw Hiram again.

"He is better than any policeman or detective, and can follow a scent with the fidelity of a sleuth-hound."

Nearly every house skirting the ravine, or on its approaches, was visited, but nothing heard of the missing girl.

"This anxiety is really wearing on my nerves," exclaimed Mrs. St. Johns, on the evening of the fifth day since the accident. "Really, my dear Mr. Hastings, something ought to be done. Do, I beg of you, be guided by my husband. He

is a legal man, you are aware, and knows all about such matters. Angie is quite losing her color, grieving in secret for her lovely friend."

"We all miss her so much. I had a thousand questions I wanted to ask her, and so many places she promised to show me. I know those horrid people are keeping her against her will." And here the tears came into Angie's lovely eyes, adding, as she well knew, to her charms. Mr. Hastings looked distressed.

"I would not have had this take place for anything I could name, and just at your visit too, dear friends, but my hands are practically tied. I am assured that my child is alive and probably well, apart from the injury to her foot. That she is now also domiciled within a few miles of this house, I am satisfied too ; but that is the extent of my knowledge, and all inquiry has proved futile. My only hope of near solution of this problem lies in Hiram, whose appearance I am anxiously expecting."

"But, Ruskin, surely you can suggest something? Oh, how we all suffer. My heart bleeds for you, my dear friend," turning to her host. "I know well what a parent's anxieties are," and here the handkerchief did duty.

"Indeed, Selia," returned her husband, "Mr. Hastings and I have gone over the ground so thoroughly, and sifted every proposed theory or expedient so completely, that I confess I am fast coming to his belief, that the trapper is our best hope."

"But, pa," interrupted his son, "surely a New York detective, one of the Bow Street stripe, for instance, would be of more service than a common—ah—peasant."

"Detectives are all very good in their way, but, as Mr. Hastings says, if we bring a detective here, he will, not knowing the ground, have to employ some such person as this Hiram to really do the work. However, we still have the alternative of a detective as a final resort."

"But, father, it is truly awful to think of a beautiful and refined young lady having to sleep a single night in one of those huts, and on a straw bed, perhaps. Why, it makes my blood run cold to think of the outrage." And here Roland looked so ludicrously pugnacious, that his sister Alfarena laughed, and remarked:

"Sleeping in one of those cottages is not so very bad, surely. I think I should like it. It would be quite an adventure, and I know Elsie won't mind that part of it so much."

Roland tossed his head loftily, saying, "Young ladies don't know anything about such things. They think it very romantic. I've seen something of that life, and I know the difference."

"Yes, one night in a fisherman's cottage. What an immense experience," said the young lady, provokingly. "Mr. Hastings, you must know that Roland and some of his college friends went out on a boating trip last summer, and were driven by 'stress of weather'—that is the phrase, isn't it, Roland?" smiling at the youth mischievously—"to take refuge for the night in a deserted fisherman's hut. I expect they suffered enough, poor fellows, for next day Roland came home blistered with the sun and really half sick. But ever since his lordship uses this adventure to overawe us girls with his large experience."

"Well," said the host, smiling genially, "the cottage life will have no terrors for Elsie, for she has spent many a night in one." Adding, with a wistful look: "However, I wish for all reasons she was home, and she will be so distressed to miss even a part of your visit."

About 8 P.M., that evening, Mr. Hastings was summoned from the parlor where he was sitting with his guests, to see a stranger who had been shown into the library. The visitor proved to be the long-expected Hiram, who had requested the servant not to mention who he was to her mas-

ter. The gentleman was much gratified at seeing the tall form of the trapper as he rose to greet him.

"Why Hiram, my man, I was afraid some mountain cat bigger than common, had devoured you."

"Take a pretty big cat to fix Hiram, friend Alf," said the mountaineer, grimly. "But hev you heard anything of Miss Elsie?"

"Good Heavens! why, I thought you had come to tell me something about her yourself. Here we have been waiting for you all this time, and now you ask me such a question as that!"

The woodsman worked his long fingers together, cracking the joints nervously, and with a report like a small pistol; and then, looking askance at his companion, blurted out:

"I guess she's well, friend Alf, I guess she's well."

"I hope she is, indeed," returned the father, smiling in spite of his annoyance; "but where is she? Come, Hiram, my good fellow, you know how naturally anxious I am. Come, sit down and tell me all about it."

Hiram sat down mechanically, and looked straight at a hunting picture on the wall.

"Thet's a peart pictur, but the dug ain't right. Dugs doan't run straight like that un."

At any other time Mr. Hastings would have enjoyed bringing out his guest's criticisms, which were quaint and shrewdly correct; but now his anxiety to know about his child almost rose to fever heat.

"Let the picture alone for the present, Hiram, and go on with your story. So you found Elsie?"

Hiram looked still at the picture, but did not seem to have heard the remark.

"'Pears to me, friend Alf, them keows ain't quite natteril, but it's a prime pictur, friend Alf."

Mr. Hastings curbed his eagerness, feeling satisfied that

his strange companion would not be driven or coaxed to say anything he did not wish, and that what he came to say would be said in his own time and way. So, humoring the trapper, he began talking about the picture, and encouraged the rustic critic to give his opinions on art.

Hiram was such a true student of nature, in all her moods, that his ideas, crude as they were, were pithy and graphic; but his hearer well knew this was only side-play, and was not surprised, though greatly relieved, when his strange visitor, looking him full in the face, said:

"Friend Alf, did ee ever carry a dark lantern on the meountains at night, and kipped the dark side out?"

"I have certainly, Hiram, but what of it?"

"Wall," said Hiram, rising slowly from the chair, "I be carrying the lantern naow, an' I hev ter keep the dark side to thee, friend Alf. Elsie's well, I've seed her and talked wi' her, bless her, an' she sent yer this. Durn my butes, I'd most forgotten."

So saying, Hiram handed to his outwardly calm, but inwardly eager and excited, listener, a piece of folded paper which had a variegated appearance from contact with its soiled hiding-place.

"Good-by, friend Alf. Mebbe I'll see ee again purty soon."

"Stop, stop, Hiram, you must have some supper before you go; besides, you have told me nothing about Elsie yet. Come, sit down and tell me all about it."

Hiram looked wistfully, but cunningly, at the gentleman, as if in some doubt; then said, steadily, but with a certain huskiness in his voice which his hearer quickly detected:

"Mebbe, friend Alf, tother side of the lantern 'll be to thee next time. Mebbe not."

At this moment there was a tap at the door and a voice said, as it opened a little:

"May I speak with you a moment, Mr. Hastings?"

"Certainly, Mrs. St. Johns," said the host, as he stepped into the hall. "I'll be back in a minute, Hiram, make yourself comfortable."

"Oh, my dear friend, I heard from the girl that horrid man was with you, and I could not rest. *Pardonnez-moi*, but my mother-heart yearned to hear news of the dear child. Have you heard anything?"

"Yes, here is a note telling me she is much better, and that she hopes to be able to walk in a few days."

"But surely she says where she is, and urges you to come and see her, and I will go with you, and the girls, and Roland; how delightful it will be."

"My dear madam, Hiram will not tell where she is, though confessing to have seen her, and her note says only what I have told you."

"Refuses to tell what he knows! The ingrate! the monster! Let me see him! I will get the truth out of him. Women know how to deal with men. Please let me go in?"

And without waiting for yes or no, the lady led the way into the room, followed by the rather annoyed Mr. Hastings, who, conscious of the woodman's peculiar and obstinate character, expected rather evil than good from the interview.

"Hiram, that is your name, is it not?" said the lady, putting on her most gracious but dignified manner. The trapper, who had risen on her entrance, stood in all his sublime lankiness, twirling his hat, like a furry benediction about to fall on a penitent, far above her head.

"Hiram, mem, some folks calls me," replied the trapper, looking down on the imperious little woman beneath him.

"Well, Hiram, sit down. I want to talk with you."

Hiram dropped into his chair with military promptness, the lady also seating herself, but the relative disproportion

in height remained about the same as before, only now the picture suggested one of the sitting kings of Africa receiving a visitor of some importance, who, by special permission, was allowed a seat. The trapper's dress and general make up—*toute ensemble,* as the good lady afterward phrased it—was remarkable, and such as might have suited barbaric notions of splendor. For on this occasion he wore a fox-skin coat trimmed with faded crimson, and a pair of very ancient hunting boots. His cap was of raccoon, peaked in shape, with a large, red, woollen ball on the peak. His coal-black locks, streaming over the marvellous length of head and neck, coupled with the grotesque smile, meant to be at the same time respectful and reassuring to his interviewer, made him certainly imposing.

"I am so glad you have seen Miss Hastings, and that she is well, and so anxious to see her father; and so we are going to make up a party and go to-morrow and spend the day with her, and we want you to go with us, Hiram, as you know the road best."

The trapper smiled with great superficial length, breadth, and benignity upon the voluble speaker, but remained attentively silent.

"I should judge from Miss Elsie's letter to her father, that the gentleman she is staying with, Mr.—Mr.—what is his name, Hiram, I've forgotten it? So stupid of me, too."

"So hev I, mem," returned the woodsman, with audacious mendacity; "very stoopid of me too, but mebbe it's in the letter."

Mrs. St. Johns raised her eyebrows.

"Such singular impertinence," she said to herself. "I must pursue a different plan with this creature." So, with her most impressive tones and looks, such as she generally found effectual in overawing her servants:

"Hiram, I want no nonsense. I insist—insist, remember," and here she held up the forefinger of the left hand

significantly toward him—"that you tell me at once the name of the gentleman and the place where Miss Elsie is staying."

The mountaineer's countenance assumed a comically alarmed appearance.

"Yer said yer'd forgotten the name, mem—mebbe yer'll 'member it after awhile, an' then yer kin hev the picnic."

"This is intolerable," said the indignant lady. "Really, Mr. Hastings, we shall be compelled to use harsher measures with this—this person."

"Do you know, my good man, that you can be arrested and imprisoned for refusing to tell where Miss Hastings is detained. You can be put in the State's prison for *abduction*," and she emphasized the word, looking keenly at the curious visage, looming above with its merry, twinkling eyes, and half-respectful, half-obstinate expression.

"Mebbe I kin, mem; haow long do yer recken it'd be, mem?" and here he looked down on her proud, vexed face with an appearance of eager curiosity, and profound faith in what she was about to answer.

"For your lifetime—as long as you shall live," she said, solemnly, delighted to think that perhaps he was yielding.

"Thet's a long time, mem—a big while. Wall, I be rising fifty, an' I recken, mebbe, if some darned critter or suthin' don't get hold of me, mebbe I'll live to be ninety or mebbe a hunderd. Grand'ther lived to a hunderd, and t'other grand'ther rising, suthing like ninety. Recken, Hiram, yer hit ninety," as if making the calculation with himself. "So, mem, mebbe I'll hev to be 'prisoned for forty year. Yer'll let Gretchen live with me, won't yer?"

His face wore such an expression of simple candor, that although she could not think the reply was sarcastic, yet she felt uncomfortable in the presence of this rustic, and impelled to change her position of attack and coercion to one more conciliatory.

"I know how fond you are of Elsie," she said, dropping the *Miss* with an inward protest, but yet wishing to gain his confidence, and in some way, fair or foul, touch the heart of this savage, "and Mr. Hastings has the greatest faith in your honesty and fidelity, and I am sure you would not wish to keep father and daughter apart. You know they have never been separated, and it is very cruel. I didn't think you could do it;" and here the elegant cambric went gracefully to one eye, its fellow meanwhile watching the effect of the dramatic attempt.

Poor Hiram looked bewildered. He seemed visibly touched when she spoke of the faith of the father and daughter in him, but the climax of the appeal was too much. He sprang from his chair as if electrified and looked into the distance as if he saw a "critter" ready to pounce upon him.

"Darn my butes," and then he stopped suddenly with a guilty look, and stammered, "I mean durn. Wall, mem, you know how I love Miss Elsie, and friend Alf, and Hugo and Ponto, and everything belonging to her. And dang me if I wouldn't fit two weights of her in cats to keep her right; but mem," and here the honest fellow's voice became tremulous, "Hiram niver telled a lie, an' I hev giv the word to the old man." Here he turned saying, "Me an' Gretchen'll be ready for the prison, mem. Ef you wants Hiram, friend Alf, thee knows where he hangs up." And the trapper's tall form flashed out of the room.

Mr. Hastings laughed heartily: "A rustic philosopher. I really thought at one moment there, that you had conquered, but I ought to have known better."

"I really think the brute was laughing at me about the prison," returned the lady, looking considerably chagrined at her signal failure. "Well, we got something from him at any rate. It's an old man who has Elsie in charge. I was really afraid that there might be a young one in the case."

The gentleman looked annoyed.

"You do not think, Mrs. St. Johns, that Elsie has been deceiving me in the past, and that this present episode is merely a ruse. If so, you do not know my child."

"Oh no, my dear sir; but you know young women at her age have fancies, and do not tell everything to their parents. Even my dear girls do not tell me quite all. At least," she added, as if having admitted too much, "I sometimes fancy so."

Mr. St. Johns entered here, and was informed of the interview with the trapper.

"He would be an ugly witness on the stand. You can do very little with such men. However, this letter is proof positive that he knows all about it, and that Miss Elsie is safe."

"I can see she writes under restrictions, and not in the full, free, frank way that she always has written to me when temporarily away from home," said Mr. Hastings. "There is some mystery here, and although I have faith in Hiram, and feel satisfied that in some way or other his hands have been tied too, yet I don't like the thought of any one presuming to hold such control over my child even if she may be under obligations to them." The gentleman spoke with more warmth than was his wont, probably under the irritation of Mrs. St. Johns' insinuations that Elsie herself might be partly in fault. An only child, and that child a daughter, the representative of an idolized wife, his companion, and, as he often told himself, the best part of his life—how could he for a moment suppose that she could in any way deceive him. Mrs. St. Johns' remarks had jarred his already—on account of the recent occurrence—acutely sensitive nervous system, and he felt and showed an impatience which was foreign to his usually placid and self-contained nature. Acting under the impulse of his present mood, Mr. Hastings listened to his friend so far as

to offer a liberal reward to the officers from the neighboring town, who were already trying to ferret out some clue to the robber of the desk, if they should succeed in bringing him any information relative to Elsie's place of detention.

"Mark you, I do not authorize you to take any steps in case of your finding my daughter. There may be good reason for this reticence, and I would not willingly wrong those who have certainly befriended her, and, for aught I know, saved her life. I only ask you to discover her whereabouts and inform me."

The officers, prompted by Mrs. St. Johns, urged that authority should be given them to bring the young lady home in case she were willing ; but Mr. Hastings was obstinate on the point, having a latent belief that his daughter was actuated by proper motives in concealing her residence, and that there might be no coercion about it. The two constables felt certain that, with their minute knowledge of the country, they would soon be able to claim the reward, and departed in high spirits.

## CHAPTER VII.

### "OH! BRAVE NEW WORLD, THAT HAS SUCH PEOPLE IN'T."

"SLAVA BOGU," said Elsie to herself, as Nadia and her daughter entered. "I suppose that means good-day or good-morning, or something of the kind, so she responded smilingly, "Slava Bogu." The two Russians looked surprised and pleased together, and exchanged smiling glances with each other. She by no means felt satisfied that she had put the right meaning into the words; but, at any rate, it had been an attempt at a conversation in their own tongue, and that was something. In a very brief time her morning toilet was accomplished, and she in the big easy-chair by the glowing fire. In a few moments a nicely served and cooked breakfast came in, two of the dishes being entirely new to her, but of pleasant taste, especially one of them, a sort of delicate pastry, which looked very foreign to her, and proved on tasting it to be savory, instead of sweet, as she had suspected. Sophia waited on her assiduously, and seemed delighted to keep her well attended to.

Seizing the child's hand as she stood near her she said, "Now, Sophia, tell me something about yourself. How old are you?" The little maiden shook her head at first, and then her countenance brightened, and she answered, in her faltering English, "Of twelve years." Encouraged by this success she ventured next, "And were you born here?" But now she failed, for the child did not or would not understand her. So she looked around the room and then

said inquiringly, "What is the name—name of this place?" "Home," was the response, in the most smiling, unaffected way possible. It was no evasion, Elsie felt, it was the child's home, and perhaps she had no other word for it. Alex, the hound, here strolled leisurely in to pay his morning respects to the guest, and gave at once a topic for conversation, in which Russian and English were comically mixed. However, each learned some words of the other's language and felt well satisfied. When, a short time after, Alex's master entered the room he found his patient looking very bright and happy.

"And how is the dear child this morning?" he said, kindly, laying his hand on her head. "You have slept well, I see, and feel well, I trust?" Elsie assured him she never felt better in her life, and inquired eagerly when she would be fit to travel.

"Are you so weary of us already? I hope Nadia and Sophia have done their duty by you?"

"Weary! oh, no; but I am naturally anxious about home. Remember, or perhaps you do not know, I am an only child, and have never been long away from home before."

"But you have not been long away. This is only the third day, and your father knows you are safe."

"Ah, if he really knew where I am he would be satisfied; but he does not know," she said, looking at him timidly.

"But, my daughter, your father will not be very sad, not so sad as you think, for he trusts his child, and your letter would comfort him even if it did not tell him all. Mr. Hastings is a good man, and good men do not indulge idle fears."

"Do not think I am ungrateful for an instant, and Nadia and Sophia have been so kind, and I will try to be quite contented as long as you think it necessary for me to stay in your house. But I feel as if I was casting the burden of my helpless condition upon strangers, which I have no

right to do. How can I ever repay you for your kind care of me?"

He looked at her with those piercing eyes, as if to read her sincerity, as written on the inner tablets of the soul, and then, apparently satisfied, replied:

"Kindness when it comes from the heart can only be repaid in one coin—kindness. If you think I have been helpful to you, be helpful to some one else. Be kind to some brother or sister of the great human family of which we form a part. All the great prophets of the race have taught this."

In the mixed glow of the sunlight and firelight, he looked indeed like one of the prophets he spoke of, and his words came to her like the words of inspiration. Both remained silent a moment and then he resumed cheerfully, "Yet I am forgetting how naturally curious you must be to know something about us. It has been a great trial to be so unexpectedly thrown among strangers, and such peculiar strangers, too. It has, I regret to say, been necessary to be reticent to you, but some things I can tell you, and I will trust to your honor that you will hold my confidence sacred until I tell you to speak. I ask no promise," seeing she was about to reply, "I simply trust you." She pressed his hand. It was a tacit compact, but binding on a nature like Elsie's like ten thousand oaths. "You may have certain suspicions while here, but you will not put those suspicions in words. First, then, what sort of a house have you got into? I know you must have wondered at the curious ceiling or roof, and the absence of windows, and the singular way in which the sunlight comes in to greet us this morning." She smiled assent and acknowledged that it had puzzled her very much, and internally felt just a little compunctious that she had tried indirectly to obtain information from the little maiden, which he had intended to give her when he thought best. He smiled so pleasantly

and intelligently at her as this came to her mind, that she felt certain that he read her thought, and colored under his gaze.

"You need not feel ashamed, my dear," he said quietly, "it was very natural, the instinct of self-preservation, to try and know your surroundings. You shall see where you are." Here, clapping his hands together, Nadia glided into the room, and at a word from the Patriarch, for this was the name Elsie mentally gave him, drew out a slight basket chair on easy running wheels, from behind a curtain. The guest was quickly and easily transferred to this, and the old man leading the way, was pushed by Nadia in the direction from which the sunlight came. In a moment she found herself in another room, or rather it was a continuation of the same room only much wider and higher, opening like a huge funnel, from the narrow end which terminated the apartment she had quitted, to the larger end which seemed lost in sky and foliage.

"What an immense window," she involuntarily exclaimed. The leader smiled.

"Yes, my daughter, a window framed and glazed by the Divine Architect, who likewise built the house. See——" and the chair suddenly stopped in the centre of the "window" which she now perceived had neither frame nor glass, and a vast ravine spread out before the startled vision of the maiden. Her amazed eyes looked down hundreds of feet below, for she saw she was on the very edge of a precipice. Shrinking back in the chair, she looked up at the smiling face of her companion with wonder and awe depicted in every feature of her expressive countenance.

"Be not alarmed, my daughter, the floor on which you rest is the eternal rock on which the world is framed. Look abroad, grandeur and beauty are there. With your young eyes you ought to be able to see much that escapes my dimmer vision." Her glance passed through the mighty crevasse with its innumerable trees and stupen-

dous piles of rock and cliff, on, on, until it rested on the tall mountains, miles and miles away, and one peak proudly appeared above them all, bathed in the morning sunshine. As she gazed a sudden glance of recognition came over her face, she bent forward coloring with eagerness.

"Surely not, but yet it is, it is, Big Ben. I cannot be mistaken?" she turned questioningly to the patriarch. His smile reassured her. "Oh, how glorious! that point and that huge tree—they come back as in a dream, so like and yet so unlike; everything seems turned round, and yet this must be the Big Ravine."

"It is the ravine, but I hardly thought you would recognize it so quickly, seeing it from a new standpoint." After a moment's silence he said, "You must not tire yourself, suppose we go in?"

She begged for another look, and again feasted her eyes on the splendid panorama.

"Oh, thank you, what a treat, now I feel at home, but, but," and here a puzzled look was turned on him, as she glanced above and below curiously. "Where are we living? What sort of a funny house is this? It seems built in the wall or on the very edge of the ravine?"

He laughed quietly at her seeming perplexity.

"Yes, it is built in the wall of the ravine, a building planned by a wonderful Architect, and erected by a Builder whose foundations are sure. My child," taking her hands paternally in his and looking at her fixedly, but with that tender, winning smile which had already won her perfect confidence, "You are living in a cave!" Although in a sense half prepared for this announcement, yet Elsie was profoundly astonished.

"In a cave!" she exclaimed, "and so near the ravine and I never heard of it. And is it large? Oh, how delightful it will be to explore it," she went on, as she was being wheeled back to the inner room.

"Yes, my dear, it is very large and very curious, and as soon as possible you shall see as much as is safe to explore. Is this your first visit to an underground house?"

"Yes, indeed, I have often heard of them, but never saw one before. And have you lived here long?"

"Longer than you could suppose. This has been my home over fifty years."

"Fifty years," she echoed, involuntarily. "Why, that has been nearly all your life?"

"No, little one," he said, with a tinge of sadness, almost of tiredness, in his voice; "I am very old, much older than you think."

His eyes closed, and he seemed to be communing with himself, and with the closure of those magnetic eyes she noticed that his face did look very aged, although fresh and healthy. Then brightening up and resuming:

"Pardon me, my young friend, but your questions threw me back into other days. I was thinking of the past. Old men must be allowed that privilege occasionally. It belongs to bright youth to live entirely in the present. But old age need not be pensive or gloomy even if it does claim the prerogative of wandering into half-forgotten fields now and then."

"Oh, I never could imagine you to be either sad or gloomy for a moment. Indeed, fits of contemplation and reverie come over me frequently. So they don't belong to any age exclusively."

"Was it in one of those fits of abstraction that you fell over the cliff?" he asked, with a mischievous glance.

"No, indeed," and then she related all the incidents connected with her accident, up to the time of losing consciousness. He listened attentively and sympathetically until she concluded, only putting an occasional question to help the narrative.

"My dear child," he said, impressively; "how thankful I

feel that our attention was drawn to you so early, for there have been some ferocious looking wild cats seen in the ravine from time to time, and your peril would have been great indeed if one of them had scented you while lying insensible."

She paled a little at the words, and slightly shuddered, then turned to him and said:

"Please tell me now how you came to save me, and who helped you? Believe me, I am not ungrateful, whatever I may seem," and here the emotion which she strove bravely to control showed itself by the tears which wetted her cheeks.

"You have not yet recovered your normal strength, my child, but after you have dined, if you still feel well and so desire, I will relate what you ask."

So saying he pressed her hand gently and left the room. Sophia came in shortly after, evidently sent to keep her company, indeed the little Russian intimated as much, and they spent a pleasant hour trying to impart their respective languages to each other. Elsie found the pronunciation of the Slavonian tongue easier than she had hoped, but yet she almost despaired of ever conquering some of the sounds which the young girl rattled off so glibly. No such trouble was experienced on the other side, for the child could give almost any English sound at the first attempt, and showed marked linguistic ability. It was delightful work, and Nadia summoned her daughter to carry in the patient's lunch before they were aware that the hour of noon had arrived.

"So we are living in a cavern, Sophia?" said Elsie, pointing to the roof. "Were you born here?"

The girl laughed gleefully, but the answer in Russian was not intelligible.

"What an adventure to be sure, living in a cave like the early men I used to read of in the library. Let me see,

they were called the Cave dwellers, yes that was it. I wonder if the Patriarch is one of them, he looks nearly old enough. But he is a dear, good man, and I am growing quite fond of him. Those curious looking formations hanging from the roof must be the stalagmites I have read of, or stalagtites, which is it I wonder? I must ask my Patriarch doctor. Now, foot, you must get well, so that I can explore these subterranean rooms. What fun it will be. How I wish father could be with me, but no, I dare not ask." And she seemed to remember the peculiar look she received when she asked that her father be permitted to come and see her before. All this was uttered aloud in a sort of half soliloquy during her dinner, the little maiden flitting to and fro, delighted with the privilege of serving her, and smiling response to her talk, as if she knew every word she was saying.

When the host of the cave mansion made his next visit to his guest and patient, he pronounced the foot so much better that she was allowed to put it down a few minutes at a time when she felt inclined.

"You are so strong and vigorous, my dear, that you soon regain lost power, but we will go to the mouth of the cave where you were this morning as the afternoon is pleasant, and wrapped in this fox robe you will take no cold."

So she was conveyed as before to the point of view she had occupied in the morning.

"Do you see diagonally across the ravine southeast from us, the big flat rock you call 'Table Rock?'"

"Oh, yes, I do see it plainly, why that is where I fell from, or rather from a point about twenty feet below."

"Yes, that is correct, and I will now try and explain to you how I came to have you for my welcome guest and patient. On that afternoon Alex, our dog, that you saw yesterday, was prowling along the edge of the ravine here, for he is wonderfully sure-footed and makes his way deep down

into the depth by a pathway of his own. On this occasion he was attracted evidently by the landslide which carried you down. He has singularly keen sight and hearing, and he became very much excited. No doubt the dog supposed it was some large animal making the disturbance. However, he made so much noise and seemed so terribly in earnest that I told Adolph to take the field-glass, a very powerful one which I brought from St. Petersburg with me, and proceed to what we call the observatory, from which we can see the greater part of the ravine and the glen beyond. He returned in about half an hour and reported that there had been a slide, and that he could plainly distinguish a human figure, he thought a woman, lying in the broken mass of earth and trees. Having full confidence in his good judgment and visual power, for he has the unerring sight of a mountaineer for long distances, I resolved to make the attempt at rescue. It was a dangerous and difficult undertaking. Of course we might have gone round and reached you from the other side of the ravine, or we might have roused the people near and secured assistance. But we are peculiarly situated here, as no doubt you begin to understand, and neither of these plans would have been feasible to render the immediate assistance which one possibly seriously injured might require. Besides, I am too old to have accompanied Adolph, and he could not have acted alone. Only two hours of daylight remained to us and something must be done at once. You know the ravine narrows opposite the table rock so that it is not more than two or three hundred feet across. Yet at that point is the deepest part of the entire gorge. Now, some years ago when Adolph used to be out hunting and trapping on the other side of the ravine, he would at close of day find himself compelled to walk five or six miles heavily burdened with game, while his home was only about a stone's throw directly across the ravine. To find some way of bridging

the chasm was the problem, and finally together we solved it. I had spent two years among the Swiss mountaineers, after leaving my native country and before coming to this continent, and had often observed them in their ingenious devices for crossing crevasses and chasms. Without wearying you with details which might not be interesting, I will say that we constructed a wire cable reaching from one side of the Big Ravine at the narrow part to the other. The end on the far side being higher than the one on this. From this cable a strong basket was made to run suspended, and so Adolph is able to go back and forward as suits him. Of course none but a mountaineer or a sailor could attempt it, but he has been both and has no fear. It was by this road that we determined to fetch you, not knowing as yet who you were, only conscious that a fellow-being needed instant help. It was decided that Adolph and Nadia should go over together, and I was to give the help needed in assisting you up here."

Elsie had listened with almost breathless attention, only showing her intense interest by frequent starts and alternate flushing and paling, but here she could restrain herself no longer.

"Oh, surely," she said, bursting into tears and laying a hand upon the arm of the narrator; "surely Nadia did not make such a dreadful trip. How could she?"

"Russian women of Nadia's blood fear nothing," said the old man, proudly. "Besides she is remarkably strong and active. When you hear more of her life and what she has been through, this will seem a mere nothing. But we had better go to the fire as it is becoming chilly."

When comfortably seated by the fire the exciting narrative was resumed.

"Some time Nadia or Adolph may tell you how they managed to sling you, wrapped in a bear skin, from the point where they found you lying motionless, to the place

some sixty feet below, leading by a path to the basket. It was hard work, but they did it and did it bravely and well, as your living presence here to-night testifies. On this side we had to raise you up about one hundred feet, but we have been doing it for Adolph for the past five years once or twice a week during the season, so it was soon accomplished. Sophia and I attended to that. I need not tell you how astonished and gratified I was to find I had been instrumental, under the Divine guidance, in rescuing the daughter of Mr. Hastings, of The Hermitage, for whom I have a profound respect."

"What a grateful girl I ought to be for such courage and kindness. I must thank Nadia and the other kind brave friend. When may I do so?"

"Nadia and I are thanked already by the pleasure of having you with us, and Adolph will be happy to pay his respects to you to-morrow, perhaps. But you have had excitement enough for one day and so I will say good-night," and giving her his hand with all the innate goodness and geniality of his nature beaming from the venerable face, he left the room.

Elsie was so excited by the story of her rescue that she could scarcely taste the delicate little supper which Sophia brought in, greatly to that young woman's annoyance, who manifested her vexation by making use of a number of frightfully long words in the language which Elsie was beginning to like very much indeed. Liking a language not our mother tongue consists largely in liking the people who first use it in our hearing. At least this is a not infrequent experience. Before the time for retiring arrived, when Elsie knew that Nadia would appear, she could not resist the temptation to send for her so as to thank her for her courage and kindness in the rescue.

They understood each other although very little intelligible language passed between them. Elsie acted the whole

thing out in pantomime and ended by kissing her warmly, and Sophia too, greatly to that little lady's delight, who kept up a chatter in the expressive vernacular of her mother's land.

The one thought now with Elsie was to see and tell her father all that had happened to her and to find out the under history of her benefactors, and try to reward them in some way. But sandwiched between these thoughts another would obtrude itself, and appear and reappear in the rather mixed dreams which came to her when she did finally fall asleep. It was the imaginary face and form of the hero who had dared so much for her. Adolph, who and what was he, and what relation did he bear to Nadia, and Sophia, and the Patriarch? This hero did trouble her sleep and appear in a score of facial contortions through the visions of the night.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SUNSHINE AGAIN.

"HERE you are, Mrs. St. Johns. I have been looking for you everywhere. Here is a letter from my nephew in London, and he desires to be kindly remembered to you, as I had told him in a former letter that you would probably be with us about this time."

"He is very thoughtful to remember us amid all the distractions of London life. How is he getting on?"

"He writes very cheerfully, and alludes jocularly to another adventure he has had at the Thompson's Villa, some twenty miles or so out of the city."

"An adventure, how delightful, do tell us about it, Mr. Hastings," said the elder Miss St. Johns, gaily.

"If it is not a family secret," remarked Alfarina.

"Of course I meant that, Alf," returned the elder, slightly piqued. "Mr. Hastings understood me, I am sure."

"Certainly, and there are no secrets, I assure you," and here the gentleman gave a graphic description of the incident as narrated in the letter. It appeared that on a recent occasion, while spending a few days at the Yews Villa, Seaman had accompanied Miss Thompson on a walking excursion, and that while returning somewhat belated, crossing a piece of lonely common or moor, they had been accosted by a couple of sturdy tramps demanding alms. This being refused, one of the fellows addressed a rude observation to the young lady, and was promptly knocked down by her companion. The two roughs, who were armed

with cudgels, then attacked him, and "for a brief season," to use his expression, "the air was merry with strife." Fortunately the American carried a trusty bit of blackthorn, and was an expert in handling it, being familiar with broadsword exercise. Yet it was doubtful how the affair might have ended, the assailants being stout and active, had not Miss Thompson, at first an affrighted spectator of the fray, promptly retreated to a near heap of broken stones, and thence directed such a vigorous fire upon the enemy, and with such skilful aim, that the diversion enabled Seaman to "put in a few blows where they would do the most good," and the scamps took to flight.

"Hurrah for the English pluck, British blood tells. That's the girl for me," said Roland, strutting up and down the room airily, as if he owned a large quantity of the aforesaid fluid, and could in right of such ownership do doughty deeds if called on. Alfarina, who never lost an opportunity of "taking the young man down a peg," as she would express it, spite of maternal remonstrances, exclaimed:

"Why, Roland, you've forgotten it was Miss Thompson, and not you, that did the fighting."

"That makes no difference, Miss Saucebox. We come of English stock, and I feel the fire in my veins."

"But, my dear Mr. Hastings, how could a young lady do such a thing? I'm very sure I should have fainted. It was a dreadful thing to have to do," and here the lady shuddered tragically.

"Really, Mrs. St. Johns, you must excuse me, but I saw you face a pretty savage-looking foe some days since in this very room and you showed no signs of fainting."

The lady colored, whether with annoyance or pleasure her host could not determine, and replied quietly:

"Ah, yes. I can talk to such people, but I really could never fight them. I wouldn't even think of such a thing."

"Not with Hiram, I hope," said Mr. Hastings, and here

the idea of this delicately-reared woman, who for all available purposes of life, was one of the most helpless of her sex, engaged in single combat with such a specimen of the race as the Giraffe, almost overcame the gentleman's gravity and politeness at the same time.

"Still we must all allow that the English girl did the very best thing under the circumstances," quietly insinuated Alfarina, "for if she had not helped, and so turned the tide of battle, it might have been very bad for them both."

"True, Alf," said her father, who just entered, but had read the letter earlier, "fainting would be a dangerous thing under such conditions."

"I agree with you, father, and it was very plucky of them both. What a rare couple they would make if things should turn that way."

"There, now, Roland, weaving one of your romances already. I should think Dr. Seaman would prefer a more delicate—I mean a more refined—lady for his wife," saying which the young lady turned toward the window, with a tell-tale color suffusing her face, followed by the mischievous looks of her sister Alfarina, who slyly and meaningly remarked :

"Yes, Angie, and you and I know the young lady who would just suit, don't we, dear?"

All smiled, and Roland laughed heartily.

"See what you get for attacking your brother, Angie. Just serves you right."

"Where is Dr. Seaman now, Mr. Hastings? You say they caught those two scoundrels?" interposed the mother, fearful that under the vexation of the moment her favorite child might say something not quite refined.

"He is at his studies again in London, and says he shall probably return to this country in a month or six weeks. Yes, the assailants are locked up, waiting the meeting of the assizes, so I suppose Seaman must remain for that anyway."

"So the constables are rather disheartened in their search for Elsie, and are no wiser as to her locality than they were two weeks ago?" inquiringly remarked Mr. St. Johns.

"Oh, they go so far as to declare that she is not in this part of the country at all, in spite of the glaring fact that four communications have been received from her."

"And that long-limbed hunter"—here the wife glanced at her husband approvingly; to have said long-legged would have been unpardonable in her eyes—"is as dumb as an oyster, and yet evidently knows all about it?"

"True, and that is the most singular thing concerning it, for I know Hiram would almost give his best rifle, 'Squeaking Jim,' as he whimsically names it, to bring her home to me again, and yet he seems as helpless as any of us. Nevertheless I know she is safe or the honest fellow wouldn't look as cheerful as he does. Goodness gracious! There they are now," and dashing forward, forgetful of his usual equanimity, Mr. Hastings opened wide the door-window leading into the lawn, and was clasping his child in a fond embrace before the startled observers had recovered from their surprise.

"No ghosts this time, but real flesh and blood," said the radiant parent, as he led the restored one into the room, where all crowded forward to welcome her.

"Ghosts!" said Elsie, after salutations on all sides had been given and received, even the servants coming up in a body, to shake hands with their young mistress, and welcome her home again; "why, who has seen any ghosts?"

"Several persons have declared solemnly to having seen you wandering about the grounds lately by moonlight," answered Roland, looking at her with undisguised admiration. "I wish it had been my good fortune, but no such luck, though I have searched the whole country for you."

"How kind of you to remember a delinquent so well,

and take so much trouble. I am afraid I have caused you all an immense amount of trouble and anxiety, and that has greatly distressed me, but I really could not help it," and here she looked from one to another with tears in her eyes. "And father all alone without his housekeeper to entertain his friends."

"Everything has been admirable, my dear, only our sorrow for your absence ; it did seem as if we could hardly bear it. How well you are looking," and here Mrs. St. Johns kissed her again with almost a motherly fondness.

"How good it is to be home again. Have you had tea yet?"

"It must be on the table now ; but where is Hiram? I certainly saw him with you before I opened the window."

"Yes, father, the faithful fellow saw me safely home, but I fear he has left for his house."

Such seemed to be the case, for search and inquiry failed to produce the Giraffe. The joy of the household was complete, for not only was a cloud of anxiety removed, but the sunlight of a bright, healthy nature was restored to the mansion ; and the singular experience of Elsie furnished an inexhaustible subject for conversation. Of course, she was subjected to a small battery of questions, which it required all her ingenuity to answer without giving offense on the one hand, or breaking faith on the other. The parting words of the old patriarch yet rang in her ears: "My child, I exact no promises, I simply trust you. We are unknown to the world ; let us remain so. When the necessity for this isolation ceases to exist, I will inform you, and you can speak freely."

When they were snugly seated at tea, the attack was begun by Mrs. St. Johns, who, indeed, had put one or two questions before, which had been simply avoided by Elsie, but now directly asked, "Where have you been living, Elsie ; we are all dying to know?"

"Stopping with some very kind, pleasant people, Mrs. St. Johns; I never was treated more generously and hospitably in my life. I only wish you could know them."

"But, Elsie," said her father, noticing the want of directness in the answer; "if they are really good people, why should they be so studious to conceal their identity?"

"I would stake my life on their integrity and genuineness, but there are reasons why they wish to remain unknown."

"It is very difficult to understand how such a thing can be possible in a civilized country like this, if the people are living correct lives," returned her father. "I can easily understand the feelings of gratitude you entertain toward them and I have the same, and would be glad of an opportunity to thank them in person, but yet you must know, my dear child, that this concealment does not look well."

Elsie had steeled herself for this ordeal, and had rehearsed it in her own mind during the past few days a hundred times, perhaps, but it tried her more than she had anticipated. When among her new friends and benefactors, she had felt it would be easy, comparatively, to protect them, in their wished concealment, against all assault; but, removed from their immediate influence, and with the presence of her beloved parent, and these friends, and the home associations all powerfully swaying her naturally frank disposition to unconstrained conversation on her singular adventure, she began at once to realize she had no light task before her. It would have been joy beyond measure to have unbosomed herself to these sympathizing hearers, but all her instincts of honor forbade. She had the irksome task before her of appearing to tell much, but in reality revealing nothing.

"If you are bound by a promise exacted from you under compulsion, you are not legally bound to keep it, my dear. Don't you agree with me, gentlemen?" suggested Mrs. St. Johns, suavely.

"Certainly," assented her husband, "no agreement under coercion is binding in law, if such coercion can be proved."

"If it is a question of honor then Elsie must decide for herself. Of course we shall all regret it, but if my daughter feels that it would be against her conscience to break silence on this point, I would not urge her for a moment. I can trust you, Elsie," looking at her fondly.

The young lady left her place at the table, and stepping to her father's side imprinted a kiss warmly on his forehead.

"Nothing would please me better than to tell you my adventures, if such they can be called, freely and fully, but I cannot do so conscientiously, and so for the present must appear in an unfavorable light, which I regret exceedingly."

"At least you will tell us if you are bored by any horrid promise or midnight oath backed with all sorts of dreadful penalties," said Roland, dramatically.

This query brought back Elsie's cheerfulness, and removed the feeling of restraint which was beginning to creep over the company.

"No promise or oath at all," she replied, "I am simply on my honor."

"Then we are all bound in honor to help you keep your faith," remarked Alfarina, warmly.

The young hostess turned toward her with a grateful look.

"At least you will not be angry with us for asking questions, for I know I shall forget myself twenty times a day unless you positively forbid me to speak at all, and then I will take the vow of La Trappe and say nothing," urged the young gentleman of the party.

"Not at all," laughed Elsie, "to have you silent would be too cruel a penalty for us all. Ask all the questions you please, and I will take my chances of being entrapped into admissions."

"A fair bargain," said the young man, delightedly. "It will be a case of diamond cut diamond."

"I think you are really mean, Roland, when Miss Hastings told us she did not wish to inform us of her curious life of the past three weeks," Miss St. Johns ventured to remark.

A certain sarcasm in the tone touched Elsie, who replied gently, "Call me Elsie as you used to, Angelina; but your brother is fair enough, for he warns me in advance, and I do not wish this matter to cause the least restraint in our intercourse. Ask any questions you like about anything, and I will answer as I can."

This settled the question, and now the conversation became general and the young hostess found that she needed all her mental resources and adroitness to hold her own. When the party separated for the night it had been ascertained by the assailing ones that Miss Hastings' entertainer was an old man, a very old man. Also, that there was a young married woman whose husband was absent, and a little girl of twelve or thereabouts, daughter of the other. Also, Roland was satisfied that he had trapped Elsie into admitting that there had been a young man of fine appearance and manners in the strangers' family, and this gave him more annoyance than he was willing to admit even to himself. His sisters denied that Elsie had admitted the existence of this Apollo, and Alf rallied her dandy brother unmercifully about his persistent efforts to entrap Miss Hastings into an admission of the fact. However, all went to rest in the best of humor and with pleasant anticipations of the morrow.

While the inhabitants of The Hermitage are slumbering, we will try to take up the dropped thread of the cave experience to the point of Elsie's appearance at home again. Under the skilful treatment of the old doctor, the patient rapidly convalesced and was able in a few days to bear the foot on the ground without much pain. Her interest in the

new acquaintances deepened as she came to know them better: their simple life and habits; the kind generous feeling they manifested toward the guest whom accident had placed in their midst; above all, the deep affection shown constantly in their intercourse with each other, touched her exceedingly. She felt sure that no guile lurked here. No criminal career rendered this retirement from the world necessary. They were entirely unknown to the neighborhood she was satisfied, with the exception of Hiram, who seemed to be on very friendly footing with the patriarch, and for whom the little maiden manifested a sort of wondering friendship; for her eyes, Elsie noticed, seemed to fairly dilate as she gazed on him, seemingly speculating as to how he ever attained such an altitude. Yet they were excellent friends, although each time he visited the cave-dwellers the acquaintance with the little Russian seemed to to be begun from the foundation. He had visited them three times during Elsie's sojourn in the cave, greatly to her delight, for as she told him, "it was next to seeing home again," which remark so pleased the honest fellow that his contortions to express his joy sent Sophia flying into the end of the room in a comic paroxysm of fear.

"Darn my butes, Miss Elsie, Hiram 'd give six cat pelts to brought yer father to this house. An' I reckon, raythe, the squire 'd give a hoss to come. But couldn't be, Miss Elsie, couldn't be. Yer see, Miss Elsie, Hiram give his grip to the kernel here, and no going back on that, if he be a furrener."

Elsie ventured to question him as to how he became acquainted with the strangers, but he suddenly became deaf, and the conversation was entirely one-sided until she changed the topic. She described her escape, but soon found he knew all the details of it, the location of the cable, the working of the basket, everything seemed quite familiar to the woodsman.

"Why, Hiram, I really believe you have been across the ravine in the basket yourself?"

The trapper smiled in his grotesque way.

"Yaras, I rither should say so. More times, mebbe, than you've had full moons."

One thing excited her surprise somewhat, and that was that the patriarch was never in the room when the trapper was present. This might be, she argued to herself, from a delicate consideration for her on the part of the host, who might naturally suppose she would wish to talk with her old friend about home matters, and would not put the constraint of his presence upon her freedom. This she knew would be quite in keeping with his character, so far as she had observed it. Yet she naturally suspected that another motive operated also, the desire to avoid questions before a third party.

She had hoped to explore the cave before leaving, but as the old Russian said that it would involve considerable fatigue and her remaining four or five days longer with them, she decided to forego it.

"But, my child," he remarked on the day of her departure, "I now consider you one of us, and we shall see you here again; then you can examine the cave and the marvels which are created by the viewless power working in the secret places of the earth."

"Oh, I should like it above all things, but how shall I know when to come. I do not know your name even, and——" here she paused, trying to avoid even the appearance of a curiosity which she felt she had no right to ask him to gratify, since he had not volunteered the information himself. "You know I may have trouble in finding my way here."

"That can be easily managed," said her host, reading her thoughts beneath the veil of words, and smiling at her, reassuringly. "Tell Hiram when you wish to come, and a way will be provided. As for my name, names are little value

when we know the person, but you shall know mine some day, for the present call me the 'Exile,' for such I am. My native land can never know me more. The true sons of Russia must leave the home of the unnatural parent or else band to compel reformation, though it be through blood and fire."

The old man's frame seemed to heighten and expand, and his eyes glowed with a fierce and lurid light which his hearer had not seen there before. She felt awed before the deep, intense passion which seemed to surge through his aged frame with all the intensity of youth. She felt that a dynasty, no matter how strongly entrenched in dignity and power, must yet have in it elements of weakness and depravity, when by its acts it made exiles and enemies of such men as this. No father, she thought, who alienates his best children, and turns their hands against him, can be right, no matter how fair he may appear to the world.

The Exile had barely touched on his misfortunes when in conversation with her, on the contrary, he had studiously avoided personal topics. Yet he had hinted that political reasons compelled his present life; that he was a member of some secret organization she concluded from several matters which had accidentally come to her knowledge. As to how Hiram came to be associated with the cave-dwellers she could not even form a conjecture, for he took little or no interest in the politics of his own country, having often declared in her hearing that he never had voted and never would vote, for fear "H'd help put in some tarned varment of a critter as'd do some pesky thing or other, an' kinder put shame onto we who put 'im thar." He was a simple, unlearned fellow devoted to nature, and in her school had garnered much lore. His integrity was unquestioned by any who knew him, and his shrewdness, when he chose, was phenomenal. No, Hiram was connected with the cave folks by some other tie than a political one.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A CONUNDRUM.

Elsie's return to the mansion was the beginning of a series of rides, excursions, etc., which had been postponed on account of her absence, and the uncertainty which hung over her condition. She had to submit to an unlimited amount of teasing and quizzing from the young people, and remarks from the older, all of which were given and received in a sort of serio-comic way which did not interfere at all with the general enjoyment. She had a secret to guard which she had unwittingly challenged them to find out, and no efforts were spared in that direction. If she had simply requested that her confidence should not be tempted and that her enforced absence be not alluded to, the desire, as said before, would have been granted at once. But she was not one to recede from any position she had once voluntarily taken, and her associates were glad of some object to aim at, and Roland had promised a box of kid gloves to whichever of his sisters should find out the secret of the residence, and the name of the young lady's entertainer. If, on the contrary, he was the fortunate discoverer, something very choice was to be the memento of his triumph, from their hands. One matter, however, puzzled the young man exceedingly, and that was the fact of Elsie always betraying a half-confused consciousness whenever the supposed young man in the case was alluded to. It had been a mere random shot of his, and he quickly noted that her response was not in the same light vein in which she had

so dexterously parried their other questions. To be sure, he had failed completely in trying to entrap "the astute defendant," as his father termed her, into any damaging admissions, although he had examined and cross-examined the "accused" before his sisters, empanelled as a special jury, one morning for nearly an hour, ending where he began, so far as information was concerned. He ended his examination by reading from the lexicon all the Christian and Hebrew names of men there given, slowly pronouncing each one and scrutinizing closely the fair face of the suspected one to detect aught of confusion or self-consciousness, but all without avail.

"Upon my word, Miss Hastings, you would make a capital witness; I think I could trust you before any jury. Not that Roland is an expert in examining, but he has shown more legal ability than I ever suspected, in this audacious examination to which he has subjected your good nature."

"Really, you ought to make a profound apology to Miss Elsie, and be indicted yourself and heavily fined," went on Mr. St. Johns, who presided as judge, "or be imprisoned for false accusation."

"I am quite willing to forego any redress that the law might afford me, provided the accuser will declare publicly that he believes me innocent of the charge."

"Let the case go to the jury," urged the persistent Roland, "for I am almost sure I saw the accused change color at one of the names."

"It is no case for the jury, sir, you have no case in this court; nevertheless if the jury have determined on a verdict they are at liberty to announce it without leaving their seats. What say you, ladies of the jury?"

"Guilty!" said Alf, solemnly.

"Guilty of what?" ejaculated her father, with a ludicrous look of astonishment.

"Guilty of concealing the facts of the case," returned the jury spokeswoman.

"The jury is discharged in disgrace, and I charge the sheriff never to empanel any member of it again within my jurisdiction," said the judge loftily, leaving his chair.

Mr. Hastings was much amused when this comic trial of his daughter was recounted to him, by the young lady herself, in a most pathetic manner. It was in presence of her persecutors.

"Ah, my dear, you now find how hard it is to keep a secret."

"If Miss Hastings finds it so hard to keep the secret herself, why, ah! if she will share it with me I will help her to keep it, you know. 'Two heads better than one,' you know," said the young gentleman, with an insinuating air.

"Yes, do, Elsie, for as Roland has plenty of vacant space in his mental habitation, he can easily accommodate your secret without injuring it by crowding," quickly observed the watchful Alfarina.

A vengeful look was shot from the languid eyes of the dandy, and to soothe his ruffled feelings Elsie hastened to remark:

"If I had such a secret as you seem to credit me with, Mr. Roland, I do not know of anyone to whom I would sooner impart it than yourself. I know it would be safe in your hands."

It was the oil on the troubled water, and all was harmony again. But apart from this repartee and good-humored raillery, Elsie really was aware of a certain self-consciousness in herself whenever any allusion was made to the young man of the family, meaning, of course, the family of the unknown benefactor. She was angry with herself for this, as she had never seen the individual in question, and only knew of Adolph's existence from the Exile.

Singularly enough, while daily expecting to meet the un-

known hero of her escape or rescue, he had not appeared during her seventeen days' residence in the cave. She was more disappointed than she was willing to own, as her grateful heart longed to thank him for his courage and kindness on her behalf. Still she could not but admit that this studied avoidance of her, for such she felt sure it was, only enhanced the curiosity and interest she felt concerning him. She recollected well, how, that early in their acquaintance the Exile had hinted that she would have opportunity of thanking Adolph personally, but day after day passed and no Adolph appeared, and latterly she was sure she detected a slight shade of annoyance in the patriarch's tone, whenever his son was mentioned in her presence.

He had informed Elsie that Adolph was an adopted son, "but yet my son," he added, emphatically. "I had a son, the hope of my life, but"—and here he paused and seemed to be looking dreamily into the past—"he died and left me in a winter of bereavement and sorrow. But from the frosty winter came bright spring, and renewed life is mine again in Adolph."

His language was mystical, but she inferred that he intended to express the satisfaction and comfort which his adopted child gave him in his old age. Also she thought the obscurity of his words arose from the natural difficulty most foreigners have in clearly putting their thoughts in idiomatic English.

The early winter kept bright and crisp, the days were glorious, and Christmas arrived before the storms had fairly put in an appearance.

The St. Johns, after a five weeks' visit, had returned home, first exacting a promise from Elsie to spend February with them in the city.

"Now, my dear girl, I shall expect you, and can take no excuse, so no more adventures in funny places, masquerading among curious people that your friends mustn't know.

There, there, don't blush child, its all right, I dare say, and when you come, in February, you will tell us all about it. The mysterious ogre will let you by that time, no doubt."

And so they departed, and Elsie gave almost a sigh of relief, for the young lady had been sorely tried between making her guests happy and at the same time avoiding their questions. However, they were gone, and really no wiser concerning the secret than when Elsie returned home from the cave. The father and daughter were alone again, and things resumed their wonted channel.

"Father, I hope you do not blame me in this matter. If you knew how hard it is to keep anything secret from you, you would pity me."

"My own one," said her parent, kissing her fondly, "your father has not been an uninterested observer of your struggle between duty and inclination. I am proud of you, for even if your view of this matter is a false one, yet I always wish you to be guided by conscience and obey what to you is the higher law. Your promise is, as I understand, rather implied than expressed, to preserve silence in this matter, but I am satisfied to wait patiently until you can honorably give me your confidence. One question I will ask, leaving to you the option of answering. Have you had any communication with these people since leaving them?"

"None whatever, but I will say that I more than expected it, yet nothing has reached me."

"That is well, and although I will not bind you by a promise, I will say that it would be a great satisfaction to me if I thought all connection with them had ceased forever."

"Oh, father, don't say that, after saving my life and treating me with so much kindness. It is not like you."

"I recognize the obligation, Elsie. I would gladly repay it, but what I mean is, secret communications. Anything above board is all right. Anything in the broad daylight,

but things which have to be concealed are always suspicious, and, remember, your knowledge of the world is limited."

Elsie looked distressed, and the tears began to flow.

"Father, I could not bear it if you suspected me for a moment. I will promise you this, that I will do nothing in this matter unworthy of my father's daughter."

"That will do, my dear," taking her hands. "I have trusted the child and the youth, I will trust the woman; for you are now a self-reliant woman, and this incident of the past few weeks has helped your maturity wonderfully. No, I will not curtail your freedom, but will welcome your confidence in this instance when you feel you can properly give it me."

"Many thanks, my father and mother in one," kissing him twice, "and I shall not rest until I can bring you into friendly contact and acquaintance with my new friends."

This settled the matter between these two, so dear to each other, and between whom no concealment of anything had ever occurred until the young girl's adventure and rescue, and the subsequent detention in the subterranean home of the friendly Russians.

## CHAPTER X.

### A NEW FACE.

By the middle of January the winter, after raging for some time in varied transitory phases of its power, fairly settled down to its work and held the earth in a firm embrace. Ice and snow everywhere gave wheels a resting spell and called into active service everything in the shape of cutter or sleigh.

One bright, cold morning, being alone, for her father had been called to the city on business, Elsie resolved to take a trip to the table-rock, where she had not been since the accident, and obtain a view of this wondrous gorge in its wintry setting. The morning was perfect, everything white and still, only the sleigh-bell breaking the frosty air into rhythmic waves as her horse sped swiftly on. She soon arrived at the road leading along the far side of the ravine, and was then compelled to travel more slowly, as the snow was deeper and less compact on account of the limited amount of travel in that direction during the winter season. She reached the table-rock and checked her horse, so as to command a full view of the valley beyond the deep, yawning abyss below. The silence, now that the bell had ceased tinkling, was eloquent, and reached her soul with a power and meaning that no speech or sound could have done. One never realizes their personality and intensity of being as when alone in a profound silence. It gives the idea, in a feeble sense, of the condition which prevails in the eternal space —an intangible ether and the central Me. But so long as

our two feet rest on mother earth such moods must be brief, and the earth life will not let us be. The scene and the memories of her last visit, and what it led to, drew her thoughts gradually to the "House in the Earth," away across the gulf, and she tried to determine its locality.

Suddenly a loud report burst upon her ears, scattering her thoughts and day-dreams in every direction, and startling Gyp so, that before she could firmly grasp the reins, they were jerked out of her hands, and the black horse, with his ears close to his head, was speeding down the road like a meteor.

In vain his mistress called to him, trying to soothe him with pet phrases. On he fled, like the wind, and, in a minute or two, a sudden whirl, and the young lady found herself plunged into a chaos of snow and cutter robes.

It did seem as if she could never extricate herself, so thoroughly was she entangled in the wraps, and imbedded in the deep snow. As soon as she had freed her head she obeyed her first impulse and laughed gleefully at the predicament she found herself in.

"Oh, Gyp, Gyp, you villain. I never thought you would serve me such a trick. To desert your mistress in such a plight as this."

"Allow me to assist you," said a pleasant voice. "I fear I was the cause of your mishap." And immediately a strong hand began to remove the encumbrances which beset her on every side.

"Thank you very much. If you will just help me with this heavy robe I can manage well enough."

So dexterously did the stranger work, that in a minute or so Miss Hastings was on the road feeling none the worse for her snow bath.

"I am indeed obliged to you, but where can Gyp have gone to?"

"Don't be alarmed about him, there is a pretty big snow-

drift about half a mile on, and he will run into that if he does not stop before. I will go on and find him, if you don't mind staying here."

"I will walk on with you; it will be safer than staying here in the cold," said Elsie.

The stranger seemed pleased at the suggestion, and after feebly opposing it, on the ground that she might be tired, yielded, and piled up the robes by the side of the road, and they started in the direction taken by the horse.

The new friend, as Elsie observed, was a tall, well-developed, vigorous-looking man, seemingly in the prime of life. He had regular features, and wore a full brown beard. He walked with the easy, careless grace of conscious physical power, accompanied by excellent health. His manners were frank and unrestrained, and, yet, she was puzzled exactly in what rank to place the new acquaintance. He was hardly a gentleman, according to the village conception of the term, meaning the professional men, leading merchants, manufacturers, and those of independent fortune, or favored birth. In truth, Elsie had never yet been able to decide in her own mind what the conventional gentleman was. She had a very decided opinion of what a true man was, but, somehow, those called by common consent, gentlemen, did not always exhibit the traits of exalted manhood.

One thing she quickly decided on, her companion was not an ordinary man, such as she had met in that region repeatedly, and sometimes in her benevolent expeditions been brought into contact with—yes, often into closer contact than was pleasant. The stranger spoke with a decision and promptness that denoted one who did his own thinking and had decided opinions on most subjects. He did not, she quickly noticed, speak like a college or school bred man, that is, a bookish man; in fact from one of his remarks she inferred that he was inclined to despise such, but his language, though simple in choice of words, was good, and did

not seriously infringe on grammatical rules. Their talk was of the neighborhood, the mountain scenery, and natural history, in which latter field he seemed an enthusiast, and yet his knowledge was, she concluded, entirely the result of observation and personal investigation, for when she mentioned an important discovery made by a German savant, and quoted in the scientific journal her father received, with reference to what they had just been discussing, and called to her memory by a remark of his, he showed great surprise and interest, manifesting by his remarks that scientific books were largely unknown to him.

They found the horse standing up to his neck in a snow-drift looking penitent enough, and he neighed pitifully on seeing his young mistress. Fortunately, the cutter was uninjured, with the exception of one of the shafts, which was splintered. They concluded to walk back to where the robes were, the gentleman leading the horse.

"I have a strap attached to my game-bag near by, which will hold the shaft secure until you reach home."

It seemed that his shooting a rabbit had been the cause of Gyp's sudden make-off, he not knowing that anybody was near.

"It has been a lesson to me that I will not forget," he said, "and I know you will try to forget it."

"Why, you need not apologize," regarding him wonderingly that he should be so much annoyed at an accident. "It might have happened in a score of ways. It was this naughty Gyp's fault. He ought to be ashamed of himself."

The shaft was soon put in safe condition and the vehicle ready for the homeward start. The lady took her seat and her companion put the lines in her hand.

He then removed his beaver hunting-cap, showing a high, white, intellectual forehead in contrast with the bronzed face and hands. As he stood respectfully on one side, cap in hand, clad in his close-fitting fur hunting-jacket, and

with that independent, yet deferential bearing, she could not help thinking, "What a manly looking fellow."

"Believe me, I am very grateful to you for your assistance," offering her hand to him on the impulse of the moment, the thought coming quickly to her, "What would Mrs. St. Johns say to my shaking hands with a mere stranger?"

He took her hand eagerly, and then to her surprise raised it to his lips.

"I will gladly drive you home, if"—hesitating—"if your horse is not safe."

She read his thoughts in the hesitating manner, and laughed merrily.

"Oh, I am not afraid of Gyp; I am used to driving pretty wild, or at least, spirited horses."

"They say Miss Hastings is afraid of nothing, that is," as if afraid he had used an awkward word, "is very fearless," with emphasis on the last, as if satisfied he stood on firm verbal foundation now. The sudden elevation of her brow and wide opening of the black eyes showed her astonishment at hearing her name.

"Is it possible you know me? We certainly have never met before."

"I think everybody around here knows Miss Hastings," he returned, evasively, and then, as she thought, a little bitterly, "No, it is hardly likely we should have met before, or at least, not to notice me."

He loosed the rein which he had held under the appearance of straightening it, and there being no reasonable excuse for further delay, she bowed and smiled, saying, "Thank you, very much, good-by;" and Gyp darted impulsively forward under the relaxed rein.

What trifles, light as snow-flakes, may influence our thoughts, our words, our deeds, our lives. What singular accidents seem to often govern our acquaintanceship with

each other. What a trivial matter often decides that another shall come forward out of the great multitude of the unknown, and become an acquaintance, friend, intimate companion, even life associate, and influence our mental and moral growth through time and perhaps on into the eternities. The amount of influence which we exert on one another is, in most instances, an unknown quantity, but often can be traced back and estimated with sufficient accuracy. It is a curious and interesting thought that, standing amid the known to-day, to-morrow may bring us into contact with a stranger whose life-sphere touching ours shall outweigh in the balance of results all we have known to the present. Perhaps some such reflections often come to the thoughtful on meeting one who impresses us favorably at first coming within our individual range of social vision.

Elsie as she drove rapidly homeward could not forget the fur-clad huntsman who had served her with such a singular mixture of gallantry, independence, and timidity. Her social instincts told her he was not in her own sphere of life. Amid the scenes where she had encountered him he seemed a sort of sylvan knight, a doughty follower of Diana. His presence there seemed natural and consistent. There was the vigor and color and graceful self-reliance which bespoke a son of the mountain, a votary in nature's own temple. But how would this follower of the chase acquit himself in the halls of frivolity and fashion, amid those scenes of counterfeits and glittering mockeries, where color, brightness, glow and beauty, with wit, talent, genius, art, and science, all band in strong brotherhood to enrapture the soul, charm the intellect, and enthrall the senses? She smiled at the idea, so incongruous did it appear to her, for something told her that the new acquaintance knew no more of such scenes than he did of the scientific books of the day. "An illiterate man, what a pity, with such a

head, too," said her intellect, but her higher thought, which seemed more instinct than intellect, pronounced him manly, courteous, brave, intelligent—a natural gentleman, and a scholar in the deeper erudition—a graduate in the outside university which numbers among its alumni some of the best of the race. "Nature's gentleman," was her final verdict, as she drove up to the gate. "I really wish I knew who he was."

Elsie's training under the careful eye of her father had been more varied than that of most country maidens; for her parent had, for her sake, spent two winters in New York, and she had mingled in a good deal of fashionable life, although her wise guardian would not consent for a moment that her robust health should be risked by turning night into day. So she would only accept one invitation, where her aunt, Mrs. Grace, a leading woman of fashion in the metropolis, wife of a prominent lawyer, would have wished her to accept four or five. She had been quite a belle, and could easily have been married to one of the exquisites, with money in place of brains, who hung around her, but she held such firmly aloof.

Although at first fascinated by the adulations and attentions which were lavished on her, and attracted, as all young people are, by the kaleidoscopic changes of brilliant costumes, bright faces, music, and gaiety, and the pleasant social pretty nothings which formed so much of the conversations she heard, the time of unmasking came, and she saw behind the scenes. She realized that society acts its little dramas and uses a variety of machinery for the purpose.

She had been taken once, by her wise parent, into the green-room and behind the scenes when he feared the mimic life of the stage was taking too strong hold of her imagination, as she pleaded, with girlish enthusiasm, to be permitted to become an actress, after seeing a few good performances. The contrast was appalling, for here dingy little dressing-rooms, garments of all colors trimmed with

cheap tinsel, and imitation gold-painted paste-board crowns and tiaras, trap-doors, ropes, and blocks, and pulleys, in short, the usual unwholesome unattractive medley of sights and sounds found in such places, grated on her senses. Men and women, on whose faces the red and white, not placed by nature's deft hand, showed repulsively, strolled about half clad in the gaudy costumes in which as kings, queens, lords, knights, squires, ladies of rank, and maidens, nobles, and peasants, they had gaily strutted the brief hour before the footlights, and so dazzled and delighted her that she had supposed, for the short period of delusion, that surely 'twas heaven on earth to play a noble part before a crowded house, and win the plaudits of the multitude. And when the leading lady was gracefully led out, in response to the repeated demand of the enthusiastic public, and bent her queenly form in acknowledgment, Elsie felt that she must be some superior being, living, in some way, apart and different from ordinary mortals. To kneel before this superb creature, the cynosure of all eyes, at whom every opera-glass in the building was levelled, like so many mimic rifles ; to bow reverently before this half-human, half-divine being, and kiss her hand, she felt would be bliss indeed. But now she saw the goddess smoking a cigarette, and exchanging badinage with some of those lower attendants who, a few moments before, approached her only with extreme deference, not daring to speak except by permission.

It was an awakening, and perhaps an unkind one, for some of the most enjoyable moments on earth are those spent under the magic influence of a delusion. The jests, laughter, carelessness, and altogether very human conduct of these superior beings, who, before the public, seemed, with the exception of two or three necessary villains, to be incapable of uttering aught else but elevated sentiments in a dignified and very becoming manner, grated harshly upon her sensitive nature.

"Oh, father," she said, pitifully, "is there nothing real on earth?"

"Certainly, my child, and this is real that you see around you, the other was the unreal, and yet only unreal in a sense. All those noble acts and exalted sentiments which so pleased you in the play, and which these people so well presented to us, are to be witnessed and heard among the common men and women of every-day life, only they are not massed before us, so as to attract special attention. And some of these people here, who are unbending so thoroughly now their stage-work is over, no doubt in their homes are good daughters, or wives, or mothers, husbands, brothers, fathers, or citizens. An actor off the stage resembles a bow which has been kept taut by the string while being used. This is the rebound when the string is relaxed."

"But that queen who did seem too lovely for anything, why, she appears really coarse and almost vulgar."

"Yet, Elsie, I believe she is a very good woman and the mother of a family. However, I do not fear that your passion for the stage will do you much harm. This will be a life lesson for you. There is, perhaps, no occupation so full of temptations and hardships in a certain way as that of an actor. It is full of peril, and perhaps the large number who prove too weak to resist the evil influences incidental to it is not to be wondered at. The excitement, late suppers, consumption of stimulants to urge flagging energies, an artificial and unnatural life, generally coupled with the fact that the demand for the greatest mental and physical outlay is at that period of the twenty-four hours when the nervous system is naturally most exhausted, hurry scores to untimely graves. Nothing but the most rigid self-denial and discipline can preserve health and vigor under the exacting demands of an actor's life. But they are proverbially the most careless and reckless people in existence."

The young girl, for she was only fourteen at the time spoken of, never forgot that "behind the scenes," and it led to the habit of looking beneath the surface in connection with the facts of life as they came to her. Not that it rendered her suspicious, but rather cautious in forming definite opinions of persons or things. Yet now deluded by her social instincts and by the specious glittering baubles of fashionable society, and for a time made giddy by the constant whirl of gaiety, she forgot to gaze beneath the surface and blindly floated with the tide. But this was only for a brief season, her country breeding and the abundant out-door exercise she had always taken gave her endurance to resist the enervating inroads of dissipation. But, although her cheek held its fresh color and her step its elasticity, she suddenly found, to her alarm, that she was fast losing her taste for thinking or solid reading. Her mind was constantly filled with the petty nothings and butterfly interests of the life around her. She noticed, too, that her father, the dearest being to her in the world, would look at her occasionally with an anxious, questioning gaze, which somehow made her feel culpable, she knew not why. Yet he never uttered a syllable of blame.

One morning, when she came down to the library in the handsome house on Madison Avenue, where her uncle lived, after a late breakfast, looking and feeling somewhat languid, her father looked up from his book, and, after kissing her "good-morning," said pleasantly: "I have just been reading something which brought to mind the visit we paid to the theatre some years ago. Do you remember it?"

His remark brought the color to her face, but she answered brightly: "Remember it! indeed I do. It was the best lesson of my life."

"I am very glad you have not forgotten it, and what a wide application the lesson you then learned has. I feared it had escaped your memory."

Nothing more was said at the time, for some one else entered the room seeking her father, but that hint was sufficient. Elsie felt it was time she looked beneath the surface of the social sea on whose glistening waters she was floating so heedlessly. She began to investigate and to seek for the true meaning—the real soul of this, so fair a body externally.

Alas! the revelation was even more astounding than that which came to her when venturing behind the stage scenery. Fashionable society, she discovered, was a mask and, like all masks, was hollow, a mere thin paste and color, paper and paint hiding a very different face beneath. She found, just under the gay shimmer on the surface, jealousies, vanity, slanders, ignoble rivalry in still more ignoble causes; she found heart-burnings, natures calloused and seared by dissipation, empty minds and dwarfed souls shrouded in languid, nerveless bodies. That expressive French word *blasé*, for which our language gives no exact equivalent, seemed to be written on the foreheads of most of the votaries of fashion, men and women that she knew.

Of course, the evil effects were more pronounced and deplorable among her own sex, as, with the exception of the gauzy-winged fops, and the class of merely idle pleasure-seekers, aimless beings who floated on the summer clouds of youth, pecuniary ease, and rose-tinted leisure, the men, whose wives, daughters, and sisters really constituted the major part of the social whirl, were compelled by business responsibilities, ambition, and a score of other influences which they could not escape, to stand aloof largely from this destructive and unnatural life. In short, the young country girl found, after careful scrutiny — behind the scenes—that fashionable life was a delusion and a snare.

She recoiled as from the brink of a precipice on which she had unwittingly been walking, and shuddered to think of the escaped danger. "Is it possible that I could ever

become like one of these pale-complexioned, cosmetic-tinted, harmless, meaningless, languid beauties, who have no more idea of the real meaning, responsibilities, and grand possibilities of life than one of the veiled inmates of an Oriental harem has of the free, independent individuality of an American or an English lady."

Mr. Hastings remarked to a friend about this time who urged that his daughter was too ascetic in her tastes in so often refusing invitations to the gay life which she so adorned, "Elsie has awakened from her dream, and, without any help from me, come to the conclusion that the pursuit of pleasure in fashionable society inevitably leads to physical, mental, and spiritual bankruptcy; and being at present solvent in these respects, she wisely decides to remain so."

So, with the exception of a few days, occasionally, on a visit to the St. Johns or her aunt's, her fashionable life practically ended at the time referred to.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A WARM EXPERIENCE.

LONDON, February 19, 18—.

MY DEAR COUSIN ELSIE: It is certainly time for a letter to your sweet self, as my last was to the much-respected parental relative of the aforesaid sweet self, and uncle to the present unworthy writer. Well, coz, I m coming home. There, now, is an announcement for you calculated to make your pulse beat at least a fifth faster than usual.

"Conceited and vain!" Oh no. Such qualities find no lodgment in this bosom. Of course, your cheek flushes with pleasure, or (?) at this very moment, and the pulse-beat is at least 85; normal, about 68. I don't blame you. It is neither your misfortune nor your fault to rejoice that a strong, faithful, and very devoted cousin is coming to advise, guide, and generally take care of you for a few days.

"When?" ah! there's the rub. Well, inquisitive one, know that your medical relative expects to sail for the land of Washington, and Franklin, and Brigham Young, about April the primus.

"What have I been doing with myself abroad?" Oh, no, you wouldn't say abroad, that is the Hinglish term. Let me see, you would say, in proper Yankee phrase, "Yurrup." You're not a Yankee; perhaps not, but you're an American, and that's just as bad; we make no distinction here. Well, to answer your question, I have been visiting the hospitals and working hard generally.

"What about the Thompsons?" Indeed, I could tell you a good deal about them, but must defer until we meet. I mentioned my little adventure with the tramps in a former letter to uncle. You should have seen me handle the stick, and Miss Thompson handle the stones and mud. You know, you always made fun of my devotion to the manly art of self-defence, but you would have modified your opinion and modified your strictures, too, had you seen that fight. I laugh now when I think of the amazed and enraged ex-

pression of that big rascal's face when he first felt the clay and stones rained upon his visage. Keeping one eye for me, he tried to glare at the new enemy with the other, and when a well-directed shot from Miss Thompson's hand closed one optic, and my shillaleh descended upon his confused pate at the same time, the yell of baffled fury was almost worthy of Lucifer (as per John Milton). Miss Thompson is the only woman, I believe, in the wide world who can throw straight.

So, miss, you have been having an adventure too, hiding away from your father for three weeks, and then refusing to tell anybody anything. I know what it means. You are only waiting for a certain beloved cousin to return from England, to make a full, free, and frank confession. That is right! Don't you tell them anything about it, Coz. It is merely idle curiosity on their part, which ought not to be gratified. What a delightful talk you and I will have about it in the early days of May, or before. If you find, of course, that you cannot keep the secret until my arrival, why you must write it to me in full, and I will help you take care of it. Two strong healthy people like you and I ought to be able to keep one secret, even if, as I suppose, it is a pretty big one.

Now for the *bonne bouche* of my welcome epistle. Don't start so with that resentful gesture, you came near making me blot the fair, white page. You will say it is doubly welcome when I tell you. But come to think, I ought to "swap," that's not a slang term is it? Ought to trade, then, if you are so particular with a fellow—and your first cousin, too—ought to swap, or trade, or exchange, my secret for yours. How would that do? But no, I will be magnanimous, and not bind you to make any return, but leave that to the eternal principle of justice within you. Now listen, as the children say, let a pin drop so that I'll know everything is quiet while I tell you. What do you think? Oh, you're getting impatient, and say you don't want to hear. Really I've half a notion to keep it for my next letter, but no, I'm too kind-hearted to punish you so severely. So here goes. Mr. Thompson and his two daughters are—are going to take a trip to U. S., and perhaps spend the summer there, and further, perhaps, may go in the same vessel with your honored cousin.

Don't you owe me something now? Yes, and I'll claim it when we meet. They are charming girls; the eldest just after your own heart, and I know you will be fast friends. Love to uncle, and a refined and elegant elixir of the same article for my cousin Elsie.

Yours in exile,

WARREN SEAMAN.

"Father, just read this letter from Warren, you will enjoy it better by reading it all through to yourself, and it has some news in it, too. He does love to tantalize."

"I must say the young man has quite distinguished himself in that letter," said her father, after reading it. "I suspect Warren is pretty deeply impressed by these charming English girls, for he is not wont to indulge in much sentimentalism. I am truly glad they are coming. I met the father ten years ago, but do not remember much about the girls."

"I think they must have been at school at that time, father. Well, it will be good to have Cousin Warren with us again. I do wonder where he purposes making a new settlement?"

"I have been thinking of that lately, and considerable inquiry has convinced me that he could not do better than open an office in Melville."

"What! so near to us? That would be delightful. But is there a good opening? There are, at least, eleven physicians now."

"Very true, but how many really good ones? Dr. Rogers is intemperate, and his once large practice is fast leaving him. Smith never has had the confidence of the people, owing to his unsteady habits. Dr. Skyler is too old, and never ventures out at night or in stormy weather. Then Drs. Armstrong and Canby are a firm of medical adventurers of the quack class, who are not likely to remain long."

"That leaves six, and, papa, I am afraid young Dr. Peet is intemperate, too, for Mrs. Wood said he was under the influence of liquor when he came to see her baby last week. She was afraid to give it the medicine he left, and asked me to advise her about it. I just told her to throw the medicine away, and give the baby a warm bath."

"Very sapient advice, no doubt, quite safe anyway; but I am sorry to hear that about Peet. How can a medical

man be such a fool as to touch stimulants? No physician who is not totally abstemious in that respect should be allowed to enter a family. I would not trust any medical man who touches liquor to prescribe for a cat of mine, much less one of my family."

"Cousin Seaman will only have five competitors, and with his ability he ought to be able to take the lead after a while," remarked Elsie, gleefully. "Shall I tell him about it when I write?"

"I would not enter into particulars, but just hint that I thought there might be a good opening here, which he had better investigate before looking any further. But what about the lecture to-night, I have procured tickets, thinking you might care to hear it?"

"Yes, indeed, but I had almost forgotten it. What is the subject?"

"'Rome and its Environs,' illustrated by dissolving views. The lecturer's name is not familiar to me, but I see he is highly endorsed by the city journals."

At 8 P.M. the lecture room of the Town Hall was comfortably filled, and the oxyhydrogen apparatus in the centre of the room was smiling a faint circle on the great white sheet stretched at the back of the platform.

The lecturer being formally introduced, seemingly a most absurd and unnecessary performance, but demanded by custom, began by graphically sketching the history of the "Mistress of the World" in outline from the mud walls erected by the wolf-fed brothers, to the unrivalled magnificence of its summit power when it gave laws to the world. Thence to its decadence and gradual transition from a vast political to an equally great religious capital. "We will now look at the Rome of the past, and by gradual approach come to the Rome of the present." At a signal the lights were lowered until the room looked dark and sombre in contrast to the platform, where on the white surface now

glowed an intensely bright circular disk, in response to the fiery torrid eye of the instrument.

The views were very fine and well thrown upon the screen, also the running lecture of commentary was direct and to the point. The speaker had spent months in the Eternal City, and had drank in inspirations on the spot which remained with him and gave vitality to his rapid descriptions. Elsie was delighted, for she was ardently fond of history and geography. Her father, too, pronounced it a superior entertainment of the kind.

About half the lecture was over, and a remarkably fine view of the Coliseum was on the sheet, when someone in the rear of the hall suddenly shouted "fire!" The cry was repeated by a hundred voices, and at once the entire audience was on its feet in a wild whirl of confused struggling for the aisles and doors. The lecture-room was on the second floor of the building and was entered by two pretty narrow staircases leading from the hall below. The darkened state of the room made the scene more terrifying. In a second the aisles and doorway were filled by a dense writhing mass of panic-stricken humanity. Elsie and her father rose at the first alarm to make for the door, but a voice near them said in a low, clear tone, "Keep your seat Miss Hastings, if you join that crowd at the door you will be crushed." They obeyed mechanically.

"Friends, the fire is below us, escape by the door is impossible. Keep the doors shut. Turn up the lights, those near, and open the windows." The loud, full imperative tones rang clearly above the din and uproar, and some paused in their wild efforts, and presently a light here and there began to appear. "Throw up the lower windows, work lively, two men take charge of each. Pass the long cushions to the windows. If you do as you are told every one can be saved." So saying, the speaker's tall sinewy figure could be seen making his way to one of the

windows with a long cushion. Stepping on seat backs or convenient shoulders as he could, he gained the window.

"Pass those cushions to the men at the windows. Now cut places in each one for the foot. The men at the window hold the cushions outside, they will reach near the ground. One at a time now, the ladies first, put your toes in the cuts and hold on the sides with the hands. Steady!"

These rapid instructions were given and obeyed in less time than it takes to describe them. There are always willing, capable men in every crowd, who will act bravely, skilfully and efficiently, if some one will only lead and direct them. As a rule, everywhere workers are many; capable, wise leaders few. The man who had taken charge of proceedings was almost an entire stranger, so it was remembered afterward, but he was obeyed readily. A natural leader, he was acknowledged at once, and no one seemed inclined to question his authority.

What the world asks for is help in time of emergency, and it willingly obeys and honors him who can furnish it.

The roaring of the flames could now be distinctly heard below, and the floor became unbearably hot. The people stood on seats awaiting their turn to descend. I said no one ventured to dispute the authority of the self-elected leader, but exception must be stated. Some rough, selfish brutes forced their way to one of the windows, and putting aside the women congregated there and those preparing to descend, were making their way rapidly into the street. The reckless element in the throng took the hint, and a determined effort was made to take possession of the windows.

"This is madness," shouted the director, "act like men, not base cowards; no you don't," as a big fellow jerked aside Elsie, who was about to climb up.

"Let him go, I can wait," urged she, who when she first heard the voice was confident she detected a familiar ring

in it, but failed to connect it with any friend she could think of.

"Not for a moment," and a hand of iron was laid on the intruder's collar, while the fellow hand dealt him a blow under the ear, which hurled him half-unconscious on the crowd. "I will shoot any man that tries to force his way past a woman," drawing a formidable looking revolver as he spoke. The weapon, coupled with the determined manner, produced the required result, and in a few moments more the room was emptied.

Of course in the rapid descent of some three hundred people even from so small a distance as twenty feet some casualties might be expected, and several were injured by letting go before reaching the ground. The cushions were fourteen feet long, so that a person of ordinary height on reaching the end would be within two or three feet of the ground, and ready hands were willing to assist them down, but some few dropped on fairly getting outside the window. These were nearly all women, as might be expected.

"Girl's ought," as Mr. Hastings said in reporting the incidents of the fire afterward to a friend, "to be taught gymnastics at least to the extent of being able to support their own weight with their hands, and be able to descend by a rope, or pole, or board if necessity demands. I have Elsie so trained that she can go up or down by her hands as well as any boy, and on the night of the fire she went down that cushion like a cat."

The whole affair of the fire, from the time of its discovery until the last person left the building, was barely ten minutes, and owing to the double ceiling and stout ironclad doors comparatively little smoke entered the audience room. The stairs took fire early and so prevented escape that way, and the doorkeeper, finding this, fastened the door, and so kept flame and smoke outside.

A few moments after the escape of the audience the en-

tire building was enveloped in flames, and eventually destroyed, in spite of all that the rather tardy firemen could do.

Various were the surmises as to who was the man of resources who directed, with such energy, promptness, and wisdom, the escape of the audience. Somebody said it was a Mr. Bartram, who occasionally appeared in town, but was not familiarly known there.

"I would like much to have shaken hands with that man, and thanked him for his coolness and courage. No doubt it saved several lives, and many more from the injuries which always ensue from a panic in an audience."

"How fortunate, pa, that the building was free on both sides, and standing by itself. I thought," Elsie said, after a momentary pause, as if searching her memory; "that I knew the gentleman, and he mentioned my name."

"He is certainly not one of your city friends, I should think," said her father, smiling; "for his manners were hardly what would be called polished."

"He reminds me more than anybody else of the stranger who helped catch Gyp, when I went to the table-rock that day last month; but no, they looked different. Yet the voices are something alike."

"No more romances, young lady, with peculiar strangers. I hope you have had enough for one season."

Elsie colored involuntarily, but answered in the same vein:

"I am afraid, my good sir, papa is fearful of some fine-looking monster running off with his daughter. Never fear, the right fellow hasn't come thus far."

"And will not for a long while, I hope. I cannot spare my housekeeper yet."

His daughter responded by kissing him fondly, and then catching sight of some one coming up the avenue, ran to the window.

"Oh, father, here's Hiram and his wife. They do look so comical together."

Perhaps a more remarkable looking pair never agreed to travel in matrimonial double harness down the hill of life, for they had both arrived at the top of the hill before, "jining in the bonds of mattermoony," as Hiram phrased it. The "Giraffe" stalked along in a sort of "pay by instalments" fashion, for as his wondrous length of limb could not by any possibility accommodate itself to a short step, he compromised the, to him, very puzzling matter by taking an enormous stride and then pausing for the little fat pudgy woman to waddle up to him. He looked at a little distance as if measuring and staking off the length of the road, and waiting at each stake set for the rear chain bearer to come up to him. Gretchen was a widow when he married her, with one child, a boy, now grown to manhood, and of whom she was very proud indeed. Nothing pleased the whole-souled, good-natured Dutch woman so much as for Miss Hastings to inquire particularly after the welfare of Hans.

"Why, Hiram, I really began to be afraid you had forgotten us, or that some wild animal had got the best of you at last. And Gretchen, too! Elsie will be so glad to see you, she wants you to show her how to make some German dish, I've forgotten what it is."

"Wall, friend Alf, I reckon I'm too many for the mountain critters yet, them varmin are mighty skeery when Jim squeeks. Hev been pooty busy of late, that's sartin. I kind o' hungered to see yer and Miss Elsie here, an' the old woman, says she 'lets a go to Meester Hastins this afternoon.' Capn, I tell yer it was kinder tough a gittin on her here," and here Hiram dropped his voice confidentially toward the gentleman, "I'm sorter dazed and tired like, resting so kinder much along the trail."

Elsie, who had been listening to the husband while seemingly occupied in talking to the wife, turned toward him with a cheery laugh, "Hiram, I never thought you would

treat your wife so, such a good wife too, as I know Gretchen is, making her walk all this distance; why you ought to have carried her."

"Curried her, curried Gretchen! jewwhatiker!" This was the nearest approach to an oath that Hiram ever indulged in. "Why Miss Elsie, Gretchen way up there, and I way down here," and the "Giraffe" acted in pantomime with his hands; "whew! pears to me Gretchen'd feel kinder dizzy, an folks'd think we was a cirkus, sure."

"Go long mit you, great big sky scraper, make fun of you wife. Ven you vas home mit me, you vas so goot cause you vant goot supper, go long mit you already," and here the jolly woman shook her fat fist at her elongated spouse.

It was always great amusement for the inmates of The Hermitage to have a visit from this couple. Both good natured to a fault, and yet so different in every possible way. However, Elsie, thinking Hiram might have something to say to her father particularly, began talking in an undertone to Gretchen, "And how is Hans, Gretchen, I heard he was home?"

"Miss Elsie," said the fond mother smiling all over, "ain't dot a fine boy? Ven he vas twenty-von yahres old, dot vas last Tuesday, he comes to me, as I vas his mudder, und say, 'mudder, I vant ter see der world yet.' He is a fine feller mit straight legs."

Elsie laughed heartily at this. "Go on Gretchen, Hans is a fine looking young man, we all know."

"Vell den I say to him, 'Hans, you vas now twenty-one yahre old, an your old mudder vill give you one present for your birthday. You go to the Schneider in Melville and let yourself made a fine schwallo tail sute, und den you go to de hat macher und buy one fine hat.' Dot sute und hat cost me more as forty dollars mit a white nectye und a pair of boots." Here the good woman paused, quite red in the face with the exertion of talking.

"Why, how nice that was of you, such a useful birthday present too," said her hearer, greatly amused at her voluble description.

"Och! but I vas to plame, too. I say, now mein boy Hans, you see vot your mudder done for you. You make dot sute on, und go nach Millville und show you Aunt and dose Dutchmans there, vot a fine son Gretchen has got."

"Hans must have looked very fine, indeed, with that new suit on," smilingly remarked Elsie, who knew Hans to be as good-natured lazy fellow, rather too fond of beer.

"Ya, ya," laughed the pleased mother, "Hans is a fine feller, but he treat too much."

Elsie now noticed that Hiram was making grotesque signs that he wanted to speak to her. Carefully watching Mr. Hastings, he would take advantage of any momentary inattention, to distort his visage and signify by marvellous jerks of his head that the visit was for her and not for her father. It at once occurred to her that he had some message from her cave friends, from whom she had not heard directly or indirectly since parting from them.

"Father, Gretchen wants to explain to you about Hans' little trouble in the village the other night, and Hiram will come and show me how to fix a place that Zoe can't jump out of. You know you promised to come and fix it for me ever so long ago, Hiram."

Hiram rose with alacrity, his face showing how gratified he was, both at her remark and also at the opportunity her tact afforded him to deliver his message, or make his communication, whatever it might be. Zoe was a fawn, a few months old, which Hiram had captured and presented to Elsie, and which had developed a jumping power which nothing in the fence way had hitherto been adequate to restrain. Elsie knew that Gretchen had come with Hiram much against his will, for he rarely brought her, if he wished to transact any business for himself. Gretchen's

object, she surmised, was to ask Mr. Hastings to take Hans into his employment; and as the young German had become intoxicated in the village on his birthday, and had suffered temporary detention by the justice, in consequence, this was what his mother meant when she said he treated too much.

Hiram lost no time in revealing the cause of his eagerness for an interview. He immediately, with many watchful glances around, with the small ferret-like, but wonderfully keen eyes, produced a letter from one of the immense deerskin depositaries which he termed his haversacks.

"The old one sent yer this, Miss Elsie, and told me to guve it inter yer own two hands; an Hiram's jest the boy ter do it."

So saying, he put the folded paper into her outstretched hand, which he imprisoned in his mighty palm, until he brought her other hand and placed it on the top of the letter; then, holding both her small hands with the letter between them in the depths of his own, completely hiding them from view, letter and all, he stood for an instant intently regarding her, and then laughing softly to himself.

"Guess 've done it cordin' to ther old one's directions, guess that's right. Naow, Miss Elsie, read that are an' tell me what yer think."

So saying the captives were allowed to emerge from the darkness of their fleshly dungeon with the white messenger between them.

Elsie eagerly opened the letter and read:

"MY DEAR CHILD: This will be put in your hands by the ever faithful Hiram. We have mourned much at your absence. Nadia is sad, and Sophia sheds tears at your leaving. We so wish you to come and see us. Trust Hiram, he will arrange all. The harsh winter hindered our sending to you before this. Hiram will guide you all right. Your father and doctor gives his blessing.

THE EXILE."

Elsie looked up inquiringly at the countenance which she knew was watching her every motion. There was a mere suspicion of a smile on the rugged face, but he was evidently waiting for her to speak.

"You know what is in this, Hiram. When shall we go?"

The trapper smiled one of his wonted facial grimaces and answered, softly.

"Tell me the writing; durn me ef Hiram hisself kin fix it."

Elsie recollected that the honest fellow could not read written characters, although he was a fair reader of print, but, the letter being unsealed, she naturally supposed he was acquainted with the contents. She read the note to him, and was much gratified in witnessing his satisfaction at the way in which he was alluded to in it.

"To-morrow?" he said, interrogatively.

"Yes," she responded, brightly. "I can easily go to-morrow. What time?"

"The old one, said he, 'Hiram, bring Miss Elsie soon's you can,' an I jest telled him 'durn my butes ef I don't.'"

"Well then, Hiram, I will be ready at ten o'clock. Shall we ride or walk? How far is it?"

"Mebbe we'd better foot it, 'tain't far, leastways for folks as yerself."

Hiram was very proud of Elsie's walking ability, probably because she was in this such a contrast to other women, especially his wife, whose locomotive powers he held in unlimited contempt.

The trapper fidgetted around nervously, as if he had still something on his mind, which his companion perceiving, said, encouragingly:

"You want to tell me something else; speak out plainly."

"Wall, Miss Elsie, I du feel kinder put aeout. Twist his neck but it's sorter wrong. Blamed ef it ain't."

"Just you tell me and then I'll decide whether it is wrong or not, Hiram."

Again those movements and that stride up and down the yard, where they had been talking in the warm sunshine of the early spring. Finally he paused in front of her and, looking off into the distance, blurted out:

"Durn my buttons, but the old one said, 'Hiram, tell Miss Elsie from me,' thet's the old one's self mind ye, Miss Elsie; says he, 'it may be best to blind yer eyes fur a bit afore going in'—der yer see?"

The poor fellow seemed so utterly distressed at having to even hint such a thing to her, that she hastened to relieve him by saying:

"Of course, Hiram, if the doctor wishes, I don't mind one bit."

"Wall yer know," the trapper quickly added, much relieved at the little annoyance she manifested, "the old one, said he, 'twill save Miss Elsie from heving to answer onpleasant questions, cause she kin say she don't know, ef she don't.'"

So it was all settled, and the fawn being duly inspected, and suggestions given and received concerning its future restraint, the two friends—for such in a very real sense they were, if affection on one side, and a thorough respect for courage and incorruptible manhood on the other, can constitute a basis for friendship—returned to the room where they had left Mr. Hastings and Gretchen. The latter seemed in high spirits, for Mr. Hastings had agreed to take Hans into his employ, on condition that he agree to leave his wages in Mr. Hastings' hands to be banked for him, clothing and necessaries being bought for him when needed; "but he can have no money until such time as I consider that he is cured of this abominable bar-drinking habit."

"Danke Meester Hastings. Hans must do it already. Ach I vas to plame. Mein boy is a fine feller, only he treat too much. Ya, ya, he treat too much yet."

## CHAPTER XII.

### SUBTERRANEAN HISTORY.

Before departing, Hiram had arranged to meet Elsie at a certain unfrequented spot about a mile from the Hermitage. She did not inform her father, for he had left her free to act as she saw fit in reference to this matter. Early the next morning she was selecting and putting in shape some little presents which she had procured for her friends of the cave weeks before, in anticipation of this visit. Then she took a brisk walk in the bright spring air, for March was almost gone, and winter had gracefully yielded to the more genial season. Of course, it was to be expected that the grim white frosted old veteran would occasionally return during the coming few weeks, in order to note how his fair-haired son, with the rosy cheeks and sunny smile, was behaving himself, before he surrendered matters to him entirely ; but he had not shown his face for several days.

"Wall, du tell, Miss Elsie, yer tripped along so kinder light and quick that I sorter thought'd mought be a rabbit or fawn, and put up squeaking Jim here," patting his gun affectionately, "ready like, yer see."

"Why, Hiram, you don't mean to say you would have shot me for a rabbit. I think I had better wear a bell round my neck so as to warn you of my coming, another time."

"No—no, Miss Elsie, Hiram niver shoots tall he sees what kind o' game is er going to drop."

"Well, then, I hope you'll always take a good look before you point squeaking Jim in my direction."

"Miss Elsie, ef squeaking Jim iver points at any critter thet critter's gone shure."

It was no idle boast, for the hunter was considered the best shot around. His strength of hands and extraordinary eyesight gave him almost unrivalled skill as a marksman. Hiram proposed to walk on ahead so as not to attract notice to them, in case they should meet any travellers, Elsie to saunter leisurely after until she observed him halt, as a sign to her to stay at that point on reaching it, until further directions. The country was quite familiar to her—she had been over the same part frequently, although it was out of the line of ordinary travel.

"I wonder where the entrance to that cave is; strange that it has not been discovered by some of the long-time dwellers here?" she said to herself. After keeping the tall form of the trapper in sight for about a mile, she saw him suddenly pause for an instant, raise his right arm, and then vanish from her sight. So sudden and totally unexpected was his disappearance, that the young lady was startled; but, recovering herself in a second, she started briskly forward toward the spot, laughing heartily to herself at the celerity with which the guide's tall figure had been hidden from view. Reaching the place she peered around in search of any opening or chasm or hollow where Hiram might be hidden, but in vain. No living thing was in sight—she seemed to stand alone upon a little mound which gave a pretty fair range of view for several rods round her. There were clumps of stunted bushes here and there, and she not unnaturally supposed the trapper might have glided along the ground to one of these, and she knew he was agile enough for anything. She stood viewing the landscape, and trying to identify different distant points so as to get her bearings, when, in turning finally, in the direction from which she had come, she saw the trapper's tall person between her and the horizon.

His uprising was as surprising and unexpected as his downgoing, but here he was close to her, advancing with something else than squeaking Jim in his hand this time. It looked like a flag, and he carried it as an enemy might bring a flag of truce to the commander of the opposite forces. Only a silk handkerchief of some foreign pattern the supposed flag proved to be, and this, Hiram, with many apologies, asked that she would bind over her eyes, before they proceeded any further. He seemed to be devouring some internal chagrin at having to ask such a thing. Elsie cheerfully did as requested.

"It will be like playing at blind man's buff again, Hiram. There, I am as blind as a bat, and you will have to lead me."

"Miss Elsie," said the trapper, solemnly, "I'd ruther'd lost squeaking Jim than ter hev to fix yer in this sorter style, blamed ef er wouldn't."

Whereupon Hiram lightly touched her arm, saying, huskily, "you'll exquize Hiram, but mebbe if I tooken yer hand I kin sorter show yer the way easy like."

"Just the thing, Hiram," Elsie promptly answered, sympathizing with the poor fellow's vexation at being a party to what he considered an unpardonable imposition upon the young woman. "You know we walked many a long mile when I was a little girl this way. You don't forget the long trips we used to take together?"

"Sh'd think er did member' em. True's preachin', Miss Elsie, yer was a streak er sunshine in Hiram's old life, living alone an hunting critters."

"That was before you met Gretchen," said his companion; "she makes sunshine for you now?"

"Gretchen, wall mebbe she does," repeated he, slowly, and as she thought, somewhat doubtfully. "Mebbe she does, but 'casionally the sun pears to hev forgot to riz, or cloudy or suthin'; yaas Gretchen's sunshine's pooty good when it's not streaked with thunner an lightning."

Hiram here paused in their rapid walk, which had been taxing Elsie's breathing capacity to the utmost, although he thought how nicely he had succeeded in moving forward, as he expressed it afterward to Gretchen, "suthin' like er snail, jest to soot her." Saying softly, "Yer'll not be scared," he whistled a few notes so marvellously like the whippoorwill that his companion was startled at finding the bird so close to her, and then laughed at her own mistake, remembering how he used in other years to delight her childhood by his wonderful mimicry of the different cries of the denizens of the wilds and woods, the "folks in fur an feathers," as he termed them.

"Mind yer foots, Miss Elsie, we're kind er goin' down hill here." She followed his lead with perfect confidence, conscious that they had left the daylight and were probably underground. Presently she heard him strike a light and could half distinguish the flash of it through the folds of the silk. The world changes when we cover the sight. The other senses are sharpened immediately, and the whole inner life seems pressing to the surface, asking, as it were, to be enlisted in the service to substitute the lost vision. Peerless sense of sight, what can atone for thy absence? Nothing on earth. How tenderly and helpfully we should feel toward those who walk the sun-lit earth, shrouded in night—seen, but alas! unseeing! After about ten minutes' almost silent travelling in what the chilly, damp atmosphere convinced her was a subterranean passage, her guide, who had only spoken a cheering word now and then, suddenly stopped and exclaimed joyfully:

"Here we be, Miss Elsie; durned ef I bain't thundering glad too, so'ser put that pesky thing off yer eyes."

So saying her faithful pioneer carefully untied the knot and restored her vision. Somewhat blinded at first by the light, dim as it was, she stood a moment to recover her balance and then opened her eyes widely to find the old

familiar room and objects which had, during those few weeks of her cave life, become so dear to her.

"Slava Bogu" saluted her ears, and a small form coming swiftly out of the shadows seized her hands and kissed them eagerly, first one, and then the other. Taking Sophia in her arms the visitor kissed her fondly, and "Slava Bogu," said another well remembered voice, as she turned to be warmly greeted by Nadia. All the English expressions which these two had learned from her were speedily brought into practice, and indeed she found that the girl had added considerably to her stock and could hold quite a conversation. As far as possible, considering the verbal limitation, questions were asked and answered, and the two Russians were made happy by the presents which were brought for them. A handsome necklace and warm, pretty shawl for the young maiden, and a small gold watch with her name engraved on it for the mother. Elsie felt that she would not dare to offer direct remuneration to the cave Patriarch, for on hinting such a thing while under his care, his brow had darkened and he informed her that to his race the laws of hospitality were sacred, so she adopted this plan of showing in some degree her gratitude. Hiram had disappeared on the entrance of the others, without even waiting for her to recover clear vision. But another was soon added to the group, and the friendly hand of the Exile clasped hers, and his paternal kiss on the forehead with the words "welcome my daughter" made her feel thoroughly at home. She looked at him earnestly. With that rare grace of manner and dignity of demeanor she thought he was indeed the finest example of majestic age she had ever beheld. The mild features, wreathed by the snowy hair and beard, seemed on this occasion unusually benignant. And the voice so full and mellow had little of the tremulousness of very advanced life.

"We have been pained at your lengthened absence, my dear child, but we knew of your welfare."

"Oh, I have thought of you all ever so often," returned Elsie, warmly, "and I am so glad to be with you again."

"Hiram brought you quite safely. He is a faithful fellow and much attached to you and your father."

"One of the best men in the world. He has known me ever since I was three years old. Yes, he took every care of me, even to blinding my eyes," she said, smiling.

They all laughed at this, even Sophia and her mother seeming to comprehend the point. Nadia soon left, but Sophia seemed as if she must hold on to the newly recovered treasure, and held her hand fast, sitting by her side.

"I should have asked you, my child, to visit us before this, but it was difficult during the severe winter to reach here without hardship, and also another reason which I will explain."

At a sign from him the little maiden rose reluctantly to leave the apartment, but she cast back such yearning, tearful looks at Elsie, who also looked distressed, that the old gentleman relented, and at a word from him in Russian she eagerly resumed her former position by her friend's side.

"Sophia knows so little English, and as our conversation must be in that tongue, her presence will not matter."

Sophia was so delighted at the favor that she rose, and passing to his side took his hand reverently in both hers, pressed her lips to it fervently, and then resumed her seat.

"I have for some time wished an opportunity to explain to you, my daughter, much that may have surprised and perhaps vexed you. I refer to the concealment, the mystery, which seemed to characterize our dealings with you. Why should we live in a cave apart from the outside world? Why be averse to answer questions? Why refuse to per

mit your friends to visit you, or even know your location during your residence here? Why ask that you consent to be blindfolded while being led to this place? These and many other questions must have often occurred to you, both during your stay with us and also since. I am painfully aware that our conduct, especially in the last two instances, must have appeared suspicious, unreasonable, and even cruel."

He paused for a moment, and his hearer at once exclaimed earnestly, "Oh, no, no, not cruel. I may have thought these things were peculiar and strange, but never unkind or cruel for a moment. You could not be that."

"Thank you, my dear, for your confidence in us, and to-day I purpose showing you that your trust is not misplaced. We do live peculiarly and unlike other people, but there are abundant reasons for it. I told you I was an exile. I am more. I am also a refugee!"

She started, which he, observing her keenly, noticed at once, and repeated a trifle bitterly, "Yes, a refugee from justice, that is," he added, seeing her look of distress, "Russian justice, which in any other country on the globe would mean injustice, despotism, tyranny."

"In my youth," he resumed, after a pause, which she did not try to interrupt, so completely did he seem to be lost in thought, "a hot-headed student at college, I joined a radical club in St. Petersburg, which had for its object the civil and political freedom of our beloved country. The members were drawn from the students' ranks principally, and it numbered in its fold some of the best and bravest blood Russia could boast. We were reckless and inexperienced, and owing, I must confess, largely to our own indiscretion, we finally became objects of attention to the police. To be once suspected in Russia is to be condemned in advance, and all that the authorities then desire is an opportunity to bring the victim to trial, in order

that by a legal farce they may be able to formally indorse the sentence long before passed on the accused. But with the vast majority of suspected political offenders in my country, this trial, farcical as it is, is not public, for the citizens at large are assumed to have no interest or rights in the matter. It concerns the government alone. However, to lessen the fatigue of listening, let me hasten to explain my own connection with the 'Scarlet Circle,' the name of our society. Each member was obliged to take a most impressive and stringent oath—weighted with penalties from mutilation to death, according to the offence—to obey unquestioningly all commands of the council whatsoever. You will say it was madness to take such an oath, and it was, but we were full of enthusiasm and generous ardor, deeply feeling the hideous wrongs under which our country was writhing in agony—in short, we were young, and when does youth reason? I said we were indiscreet and young, but our enemies were old, crafty, and as silent as the grave, they encouraged indirectly our meetings and inflammatory utterances, gradually weaving around us the meshes of one of the most astute and wide-reaching systems of surveillance that exists on earth, not even excepting that in Paris. The end might easily have been foreseen. It was the old story of the moths and the candle. One night the police swooped upon us, as an eagle on its prey, and with the exception of some five or six, who by sheer strength and some favoring opportunity from the confusion and darkness, captured the entire society. It was a special meeting called to consider a measure which we had long contemplated, but now proposed to take measures to carry out. Not a man was absent, and the success of the authorities was complete, with the few exceptions mentioned, of which I happened to be one. I weary you with this long story, in which naturally your young life cannot feel much interest."

"No, indeed, I am intensely interested and curious to hear the rest," returned his listener, whose thoroughly absorbed manner and attitude during the recital proved the truth of her statement.

The old man smiled in a way that showed his gratification and at once proceeded with the history. "How we managed to hide ourselves from the persistent and relentless agents of the government is not pertinent to my story to relate, at least not at present. It taught the St. Petersburg police and the Czar's army of spies and secret agents that they were not omnipotent, for they were completely foiled. Of those arrested, after the usual travesty of justice behind closed doors, it was publicly announced that forty conspirators against the peace of Russia had been convicted and sent to Siberia for life. The rest suffered various terms of imprisonment, so the 'Scarlet Circle,' those in power fondly believed, was destroyed root and branch. Unfortunately, on account of the Circle, I had a short time previously been brought specially under the notice of the police and was now diligently sought for. Doubtless every house in the city was entered in the search for me and my comrades, but, as I said before, in vain. Although every avenue leading from the capital was watched by sharp eyes, yet we managed to escape and reached other countries. I came to America, very doubtful if I could ever live safely in my native country again, but yet more determined than ever to work for her enfranchisement. It requires opposition to develop the latent resources of humanity.

"In spite of the immensely powerful machinery under control of the authorities 'Scarlet Circle' societies sprang up everywhere. Within a year after my leaving Russia there was not a town of any importance in that country but had a branch of the secret organization, whose symbol was the blood-red ring. There were hundreds of political

refugees in this country who, like myself, had escaped from the tender mercies of the Czar, and sooner or later became members of the association. Indeed, they were eager to join any body or engage in any work which had for its ultimate object the relief of their Fatherland from the destructive rule of an iniquitous despotism, which regarded the people as so many rightless feeders of the rapacious imperial house with its army of conscienceless myrmidons. On account of my previous experience I was soon elected as chief of the 'Head Circle' on this continent. We had constant communication with each other and with our friends in Russia. What occurred in our circle was soon known in every other, the world over, for we have members wherever Russians live. Finally I was summoned by the controlling council to return to Russia and join in their deliberations. So very many years, over forty, having elapsed, I did not much fear recognition, and yet despotic governments never forget. The memory of hate is tenacious. I had some misgivings at going and leaving my wife and son, for I had long years before met and married a native of sunny Italy, and my only child was a boy of tender years. But my oath was sacred, and having promised obedience, I should have gone even if the danger had been very much greater than it really was. I was not recognized, for comparatively few of my foes who had known me in my former experiences were living. I remained some months in the metropolis of the empire, and executed several urgent and perilous commissions for the Grand Chief. Singularly fortunate in my enterprises, I seemed not even to have drawn suspicion on me, when one unlucky night, leaving the council chamber with credentials and special instructions for a provincial council some hundreds of miles away, I felt that I was being shadowed.

"As I was to start for my destination before daylight next morning, and should probably be absent several weeks,

I felt confident in ultimately outwitting the police, even supposing they had recognized me, which was hardly likely, if I could elude the foe who was now dogging my footsteps. The case to me was plain as daylight. I was suspected. The government hounds were on my track, and I was to be run to kennel with abundant evidence on my person to send me to Siberia for life. All the horrors of that northern servitude, separation, worse than by death, from my family, now looking for my near arrival home, stared me in the face. To go to the Siberian mines would be burial alive—a tortured existence, with no hope of escape but by death. I resolved at once that I would not be taken. I was well armed and I would defend myself to the last. To proceed to my lodgings would be fatal, so nothing was left but to try and lose my follower in the varied windings which one as familiar with St. Petersburg as I was could easily make. After a couple of hours spent in this attempt, but without avail, I knew that matters must speedily be brought to a crisis, for my conveyance left for the West at two o'clock, and it was now after twelve. On, on, like a sleuth hound came that untiring enemy. Now and then I caught a glimpse of him, but he was wary, and gave me no fair chance to determine his special character, although I was satisfied from his bearing that he was a government detective and a man, I judged, of about the same age as myself.

"'Heaven help him, then,' I said to myself at length, 'he must die for the good of Russia.' I shrank from taking life unnecessarily, not being naturally bloodthirsty, but I would not go to Siberia, and at the same time by suffering myself to be arrested implicate my associates by the operation of circumstances which would then be beyond my control, giving a clue to their identity and residence. I at once made my way rapidly to some vacant lots in the suburbs, and not very far from my lodging. Here I decided

to conceal myself until the spy came boldly to the front and showed his real intention. I soon found shelter behind an old wall, on one side of a small parade ground, which had been deserted for some time. In a few moments my relentless pursuer came up and stepping cautiously from the shadow into the imperfect moonlight peered anxiously about. There was no time to hesitate; in a moment more he would see me, so I resolved to take the initiative, and sprung toward him pistol in hand.

"'What do you mean,' I exclaimed, 'by following me in this way? what do you want with me?'

"The man stepped back, seemingly startled by my sudden appearance, but immediately recovered himself and covered me with his weapon.

"'Outlaw!' he hissed, venomously; 'I know you; the game is up; surrender on your life!' at the same instant throwing open his loose outer garment and displaying his badge as a captain of the secret police. At once his identity flashed on me, and I remembered him as a man who had professed great friendship for me in my early experience with the Circle, and after the arrest had shown himself particularly zealous in collecting evidence against the captives and in instituting rigid search for those of us who escaped. Too late we discovered that he was a spy in government employ, and so well had he dissembled that he was once ballotted on for admission to the order.

"Many an oath had I heard registered to take the life of the spy Rignault if opportunity ever offered, and here was the man now facing me in the moonlight, with a sneer of triumph distorting his hateful features. Yes, the recognition was mutual, although his discovery of my personality had doubtless been made some hours before. I rapidly reasoned that he was too eager to capture me and so earn reward and promotion by the arrest of an old offender—for there was a standing price upon my head—and so

would not fire unless as a last resort; so when he again summoned me to surrender, at the same time advancing upon me, I rapidly raised my pistol and fired at his head point blank. So sudden had been my movement that he had not time to anticipate me, although as my bullet entered his brain his weapon was discharged, but the ball failed to touch me. He fell prone, and without pausing to examine further I fled the scene, and making my way rapidly to my lodging, was within an hour speeding away from the city. My passports having been carefully prepared and signed through the influence of a member of the Council, who was related to a prominent official, I had comparatively little trouble in reaching my destination. Here I executed my commission, and on telling my story it was decided that it would be madness for me to remain in the Czar's dominions any longer, and so after one or two narrow escapes from capture, I succeeded in reaching this country again and was reunited to my family. I soon received information from Russia that Rignault had informed the Bureau of Secret Police of my presence in the capital, and that plans had been taken to capture me the next day, but that he, seeing me leave the Circle rooms, had somehow divined that the prey was about to escape, by one of those intuitions which detectives and policemen sometimes have, and determined to follow me and, if necessary, make the arrest himself and so forestall any possible intention on my part. When his body was found, it was at once surmised as to the author of the tragedy, and search was being instituted everywhere. I should probably be traced to America, and requisition would be made for me as an escaped murderer, so I was warned to keep out of sight for a time at least."

The aged narrator paused, and fixing his piercing glance upon the young lady, asked, in a low, impressive tone, "Can you marvel at my isolation from the world, or the

mystery and secresy which surrounds and envelops me and mine?"

"Oh, dear, what a wonderful life, what an eventful history, but surely you are safe now. All these dreadful things happened so long ago, the Russian Government has forgotten, has it not?" said Elsie, trembling with emotion and interest, for the singular story had impressed her almost beyond expression.

"No, my child, not so. Governments never forget. Individuals pass away, but governments or dynasties endure, and their memories are eternal. In my country, if I can be said to have a country, political offences are neither forgotten nor forgiven. True, I am no longer hunted for, as I am naturally supposed to be dead, but should I again appear to the world, strange questions would be asked, my nationality soon discovered, and some travelling fellow-countryman would carry the tale. Besides, I have a certain task to do in forwarding this great work going on in Europe, and especially in Russia, looking to the destruction of despotisms and the elevation of the oppressed masses."

"But surely, surely, you are not a—oh, it cannot be, I will not believe it of one so good and kind," exclaimed the impulsive hearer, clasping her hands together fervently.

"Let me say it for you, that dreadful word which your gentle lips refuse to utter. My daughter, I see the word in your mind—Socialist. That word is not so bad when it is spoken, is it?" said the old man, smiling. "Yes, I am afraid I am, but not in the sense perhaps that you understand it. Some time when you come to appreciate the full iniquity of our rulers and our hideous wrongs—wrongs enough to make the very stones rise in bloody mutiny—then you will have a kinder feeling toward the poor Socialists. But let us have some refreshment and then I will show you the cave as I promised so long ago."

Giving signal by clapping his hands, presently Nadia

and her daughter appeared bearing the necessary things, and soon a substantial lunch was spread upon the snowy cloth.

"Sophia, you must sit by me," said the young lady. "I must see as much of you as I can while here," to which the young Russian, who had been summoned from the room before the patriarch's story ended, to help her mother as Elsie supposed, joyfully assented, but her parent, with due regard to the proprieties, urged that they should wait on the table, and lunch by themselves afterward.

"No, indeed; please let me have my way for this once," pleaded the guest; "let us all dine together and help ourselves—it will be much nicer so." And, of course, she carried her point, and a very joyous little party they were.

Elsie was delighted to be able to use her Russian again, and with the skilful aid of the exile, who, like most of his educated countrymen, was an accomplished linguist, she succeeded in mastering the pronunciation of some words that she had in vain attempted under Sophia's tutorage. But where was the other member of this simple-hearted kind family—Adolph—whom she had never seen? She would fain have asked after him, but somehow shrank from doing it. The burden of her gratitude weighed upon her, for she knew that he had been the chief instrument of her rescue, and she longed to thank him. She saw signs of him everywhere, for most of the ingenious things which had attracted her attention and admiration in the room, Sophiá had informed her, were his work. Indeed, the young Muscovite thought there was nobody quite equal to "Uncle Adolph," as she called him, for she soon learned to substitute the English word uncle for the Russian word of the same meaning, which she had first used in speaking of him to Elsie. "Uncle Adolph" was her hero, and the little maiden rang his praises constantly.

Elsie found the cave much more extensive than she had anticipated, and indeed more interesting. There were about thirteen chambers or apartments of varying size, and some of the lime formations—the stalagmites and stalactites—were "grandly beautiful," so the visitor expressed herself. The cathedral, as the largest room was named, for each compartment bore some significant title, was magnificent. It had an arched or dome-shaped roof, which glittered like a firmament of diamonds; crystals, icicles, pendants, curious and grotesque forms—countless shapes of the sparkling material reflected the torchlight in every direction. It was to Elsie a very Aladdin's palace of wonders, and her brain was fairly bewildered by the treasures which nature had so lavishly scattered on every side—above and below.

Then there was the waterfall, and the grotto, and the council chamber, and the "Last Supper," having a singular resemblance to the celebrated picture bearing that name. The whispering gallery, too, was remarkable in its acoustic conditions, rivalling the noted circle in the London Cathedral. Altogether Elsie was exceedingly pleased with her visit, and sorry when the time warned her to prepare for the homeward trip so as to reach the Hermitage by dark.

"Oh, I do wish you could know my father; I am sure you would like him, and I have often heard him express the greatest sympathy with the oppressed people in Russia. I heard him say once, after reading of the brutal act of some official there, that if he lived in Russia he would be a Socialist," said the young lady, clasping the hands of her host warmly at parting.

The old man's eyes sparkled, and a faint tinge of deepened color came to his face, as he answered: "Did he, indeed! then I hope things will so point that we can meet, and that very soon. Farewell, my dear daughter, may the angels guard you. We shall soon meet again."

Hiram now appeared on the scene, as the exile departed, and again apologized for binding her eyes. "Really, I rather enjoy it, Hiram, and it prevents my seeing the dismalness of this passage," was her cheerful response.

The homeward journey was similar to the outward, only after parting from her Hiram followed at a moderate distance, keeping her in sight until she reached her own gate.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### UNWELCOME VISITORS.

One morning, shortly after Elsie's visit to the cave, Mr. Hastings was summoned to the parlor to meet a stranger. A plain, matter-of-fact-looking person, dressed like a mechanic, greeted him on his entrance.

"Mr. Hastings," he began at once, before the gentleman had time to speak, "if you will close the door and assure me that we are away from other ears, I will disclose at once the object of my visit."

The owner of the premises was rather disconcerted for a moment and looked scrutinizingly at his visitor, but seeing no cause for suspicion in the calm business-like face and manner of the other, promptly recovered his ordinary self-possessed bearing. Closing the door carefully, he said: "Be seated, sir, we are entirely alone; that is, so far," he added, cautiously, "as ordinary conversation is concerned."

The stranger smiled at the last words, and evidently appreciated the hint they were intended to convey.

"Your suspicions are natural, but will disappear when I inform you of the purport of my visit."

"Please proceed," said the host, calmly. "I am awaiting your statement."

"I am an English detective, and am in this country on the track of a criminal," promptly returned the visitor, fixing his eyes keenly on the gentleman. "I understand that you were robbed a few months since, and have failed as yet to obtain any clew to the identity of the burglar. Is that correct?"

"It is; but I fail to see any possible connection between your escaped criminal and the attempt on my house."

"Be patient," responded the other, coolly; "I have good reason to believe that they are very closely connected."

"Indeed," said Mr. Hastings, now thoroughly interested; "but upon what do you base your conjecture?"

"Pardon me if, from prudential motives, I do not give you the full details of my investigations so far, as they are not quite completed, but I am gradually weaving a network around this accomplished scoundrel from which he will find it exceedingly difficult to extricate himself. I come to you for a missing link in the chain of evidence."

"But even supposing your proofs are complete for conviction, where is your man? First catch the hare before you proceed to cook him, I should think."

"I can put my hand on him at any moment I choose; but, as time is valuable, let us proceed. Are you willing to answer my questions?"

"Certainly, so far as they have a bearing on the subject. I am a magistrate myself and am always willing to aid any officer of the law in the discharge of his duty," said Mr. Hastings, whose doubts were now entirely dissipated.

In the succeeding half-hour the detective, by a few adroit questions, succeeded in obtaining all the details of the robbery of the desk, so far as the proprietor knew them.

"Thanks, Mr. Hastings, these points will help me considerably and may indeed prove the missing link in our chain; but the fellow, it seems, did not succeed very well, after all?"

"No; so far as cash was concerned his booty was small, but he carried off some valuable papers."

"But why should he have gone right to that desk, unless he knew of your habit at some time of keeping money there?" said the detective, meditatively.

"That is the singular part of it, for I did keep cash there

at one time, sometimes in considerable amount, but have not done so lately—not for some years."

"Your servants know that you frequently have large sums in the house, and probably are aware of your place of deposit."

"I suppose some of them are, but I have no reason to suspect any of them. So far as I know, they are honest and above all suspicion."

"So far as you know—yes," said the stranger, a little sarcastically; "but, my dear sir, if you had been a detective as many years as I have, you would trust no one until the proofs of integrity were piled 'Pelion on Ossa.'"

His hearer looked up surprised, for the man spoke with a precision and accuracy which was unusual with his class, and then answered:

"Heaven forbid that any experience should ever be mine which should give universal distrust of my fellow-men."

"*Humanum est errare*," quoted the detective to his wondering listener; "but we must take care that they do not err too much, or good-by to our chances."

Thanking the gentleman for his courtesy and information, the Englishman closed his note-book, in which he had carefully entered everything of any importance communicated by the master of the villa, and took his departure, saying that he might possibly call again or send for further information before very long.

"I suppose you would allow me, if I should deem it necessary, to examine the servants, especially the governess?" he asked, while standing on the doorstep.

"Certainly, I have no objection to any measures necessary to subserve the interests of justice," was the answer, and the officer sprang into the waiting cab, and was driven rapidly away.

A week later, Mr. Hastings was again asked to meet a

stranger in the parlor, and responded to the summons promptly. Elsie, who had been in the room when the visitor entered, and had retreated at once, met her father in the hall, about to enter, and detained him for an instant.

"Father, he is a most peculiar-looking fellow. He quite startled me at first, his eyes looked so like—" she said, in a whisper. "If I did not know it was impossible, I should be certain it was he."

"Don't indulge in baseless fancies, my dear. It is the English detective, I have no doubt, that visited me last week. He is a peculiar man, and has a history, I should say, that might be interesting, at any rate, he is much better educated than most of his class. However, I must not keep this dreadful fellow waiting, good-by."

"But, pa, take care of yourself. Mrs. Wagram said she saw the other man last week, and didn't like his appearance at all."

"I am not a bit surprised at Mrs. Wagram talking so, but when did my fearless daughter begin to grow timid. A young lady who could live among total strangers for three weeks and then pay clandestine visits, alone and unprotected since, keeping all her friends in the dark, surely cannot be afraid of anything."

Elsie knew by the expression of her father's face that he was speaking mainly in jest, and yet, in spite of herself, her lip quivered and her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, father, you know how gladly I would tell you all, if I possibly could, but——"

"There now, Elsie, you know I would not hurt your feelings for worlds; we two know each other too well for that. You will explain everything to my satisfaction one of these days, I am confident. I only spoke so, to scare away your timid fit which is unlike you."

Kissing his forehead, she pushed him toward the parlor

door, saying, "Now go and see your detective if you must; good-by."

On entering the room Mr. Hastings was astonished to find an entire stranger instead of his interviewer of last week. So impressed had he been with the idea that he was to meet the English detective, that he could not help showing his surprise in his manner. This the new-comer noticed at once, for his quick restless eyes seemed to let nothing escape; and yet Mr. Hastings thought that he avoided his full gaze. Whether his daughter's words had exerted any influence or not, he could not help receiving the same impression which she did.

"You did not expect to see me, Mr. Hastings, I perceive; that is, you expected another man, did you not?"

"I certainly did, but perhaps you have come in his place?"

"I am, that, but when did he say he was agoing to come again?"

"Well, he did not say he was coming back at all, positively, but might do so, or possibly would send."

"That's jolly right," said the listener, with a gratified manner, still rolling the eyes around furtively "an' he's sent me."

"And what is your name, please?"

"Name! Oh, Lukens; yes, Lukens, at your service."

"Your name is not Lukens, or I am mistaken," thought the gentleman; "but I suppose detectives have as many aliases as the scoundrels they try to bring to justice."

"Well, Mr. Lukens, what do you wish this morning?"

"Ah, yes, business before pleasure, that's correct."

The fellow's assurance was so irritating, that his hearer felt strongly inclined to order him out, but he controlled his feelings and suffered him to proceed.

"Perhaps, then, you will be good enough, Mr. Hastings, to go over, ah, well, recapitulate is the word," and he

smiled in a satisfied way as if pleased with himself at having found such a fine word. "Recapitulate," he repeated, "I think, covers the ground, so that I may know precisely—yes precisely 's the word, precisely, what my—pal—no—not that——"

"*Confrère,*" suggested the hearer, who was now really amused.

"*Confrère?*" said the other, slowly, as if handling a new species of verbal monstrosity for the first time, and a little afraid it might bite him, or might express something opposite to his wishes.

"Colleague, then," again interpolated Mr. Hastings.

The visitor seized it with the avidity with which a trout snatches a fly, when temptingly offered.

"Colleague, that's the word. What fine things words are, Mr. Hastings, when you get 'em right, an' I'm blowed if you haven't a purty good stock on 'em, and all hummers too, I'm blessed if they ain't."

"So you wish me to inform you of what your colleague did while here; is that it?"

"Blessed if it ain't—right to a trivet."

This appeared reasonable and, although somewhat suspicious, the gentleman, who was becoming rather impatient, gave a detailed account of what had transpired at the interview with the previous detective. The listener lost not a word but carefully noted everything in his case book, a new one, with the words, Case Book No. 5, showily printed in gold letters on the outside, and which he took good care should be seen.

"So, ah, Madam Wagram—Wagram, I think you put it?" Mr. Hastings nodded; "this lady was not examined?"

"No, and perhaps you would wish to interview her," said the gentleman, who was anxious to escape.

"Just the thing, and we need not detain you, Mr.—au—Hastings. Let me see this Mrs. Wagram, please."

So the housekeeper was summoned, and Mr. Hastings left them, saying : " Mrs. Wagram, this gentleman is an English detective sent to obtain information concerning the robbery of my desk. Will you please give him an account of it as far as you know?"

When alone with the Frenchwoman the detective's manner changed completely, and he became obsequious and even fawning. "I am pleased beyond measure to meet a lady of your intelligence—and a French lady, too—noted all the world over for their wit and observation. I know you can tell me everything, for I have heard of you before, and how very lucky the family here is to have you to take charge of things."

The result was, the delighted lady's tongue was loosened and she literally told him everything; told him where the family plate and valuables were stored, where money was kept when in the house, and also the fact that the following week the proprietor and his daughter were to be absent on a visit for a few days ; and she confided that she meant to take advantage of the circumstance to go and see her married sister who lived about twenty miles off.

" Of course I shall only be away for the day and shall return in the evening, Monsieur, for I must take great care of the house when Meester Hastings and Mademoiselle are away."

" Now, Mrs. Wagram it is a shame, a burning shame to keep you confined so. You lose your bright color and that complexion for which your countrywomen are so famous," said the detective, gallantly. " Why not stay two days at least with your sister. The house is safe enough I'm sure. We're watching the house, and I assure you, my dear Madame, it is absolutely safe. Go and stay two days. It would be cruel to go twenty miles and back on one day. Why you couldn't get half your visit out."

" Oh, how I should like it! Dear Annetta, she say to me

last time, 'Ma sœur, you must come one week.' Oh, I am only afraid Meester Hastings will not let me go only for one day."

"Don't tell him anything about it. If the house is safe that's all he cares for. Jest you go."

"And Monsieur you be really watching la maison—truly—la verité?"

"Yes, my pal—I mean my colleague and me, we never takes our eyes off it night or day. Looking for this thief, you see. Why, the house's as safe as if it was in the Queen's Palace."

Having obtained all the information desired and also a half promise from madame that she would take the two days' holiday with her sister, the detective departed.

Mr. Hastings and Elsie the following Monday left for the city to pay the long postponed visit to Mrs. St. Johns and family, Elsie to remain for two or three weeks and Mr. Hastings to return at the end of the week.

Within an hour of their departure Mrs. Wagram was en route for her sister's abode, having made up her mind to spend two days at least before returning. That night the Hermitage was entered by burglars and the family plate, some valuable jewelry, and other things taken, besides some $300 in money. The total loss was about $3,000. The robbery was skilfully accomplished and the booty carried off, and not a trace which could avail as a clue to the perpetrators of the act left behind. A diamond cross worth $1,500, an heir-loom of generations, was among the missing valuables. This, with several rings, bracelets, necklaces, and earrings, some of which were very precious, both from intrinsic and associative value, were deposited in the strong closet in Mr. Hastings' dressing-room. The jewel-box containing them was taken away by the thieves, in all probability, without being opened.

The robbery was evidently the work of professionals

who had knowledge of the interior arrangements of the building. No one sleeping in the house was disturbed, and not until late in the next morning was it suspected that the mansion had been invaded by midnight prowlers who "had at their leisure worked their pleasure," as James Martin, the coachman, pithily put it, when informed by his sweetheart, the upper housemaid, of what had taken place.

"Indeed, James, and it's just dreadful, it is, and Mrs. Wagram away too; and, poor soul, she'll cry her eyes out when she hears it, she jest will."

"Jane, in my opinion Mrs. Wagram never oughter have gone away from home and the master being away."

"But, law bless you, James, she couldn't have stopped them thieves, s'posing she'd been here, now, could she? Women can't fight, and she sleeps as sound as any on us."

This was unanswerable, but yet James, who was not too fond of the fussy Frenchwoman, held privately to his first opinion, although he would not dispute the matter with Jane, whom he well knew was much attached to the housekeeper. So, wise man that he was, he improved the shining hour of leisure in furthering his courting interests and having a delightful talk about pleasant matters with the girl of his heart.

When Mrs. Wagram did return it was pitiable to behold her grief. She cried and moaned like some poor denizen of the woods when wounded by the cruel sportsman. She was implicitly trusted by the family and she returned their trust by all the affection and devotion that her Gallic nature was susceptible of.

"Oh, Jane, I shall die; oh, ma tête, ma tête!" clasping her head with both hands. "Je suis très mal." Then, a new idea seizing her, she started up. "Oh, that villain—that one traitor. Je crois. Oh le grand bête—le diable! I will kill him, I will."

"Why, Mrs. Wagram, what is it—who do you think of—

where is the villain?" said Jane, bewildered, and wishing that James was there to explain matters and tell her what she had better do, for she really was afraid the impetuous Frenchwoman was going crazy.

"Le villain—le grand villain; why the detective to be sure. He no detective—he one grand robber. Je suis sure, je suis."

Jane, who knew nothing about the communications made by Madame in a moment of vanity and confidence, in the full belief that it was all right, or at least safe enough, was more puzzled than ever, and looked anxiously toward the door in order to be sure of an exit in case a violent fit on the part of the excited housekeeper should render retreat advisable. But Mrs. Wagram after a while quieted down, and although most of the time dissolved in tears, yet resumed her ordinary duties with increased alacrity, for she was a notable housekeeper, and a capital manager, in spite of her vanity and eccentricity.

Mr. Hastings returned about Thursday, having been hastened by a letter from Mrs. Wagram, telling him, amid numerous expressions, mostly in French, of sorrow and regret, of what had occurred.

"It is too bad," he said to his daughter, "but this poor woman seems to blame herself, and I cannot see how she is to blame. That cross I intended for your wedding present when that day arrived, as I suppose it will. It was your grandmother's, and I meant to have had it reset."

"Don't let that vex you, father; my wedding is a thing of the very uncertain and remote future, if ever at all, and I really don't like crosses anyway, even if they are diamond. It isn't as bad as if there had been a fire and we had lost all."

It was with some difficulty that Elsie was persuaded to remain longer at the St. Johns'. She would much have preferred to return with her father for several reasons, but

especially on Mrs. Wagram's account, to whom she was sincerely attached. But Mrs. St. Johns wouldn't hear of it, and she was forced to remain for a few days longer.

The young people at the city mansion were very fond of society, and Elsie found herself in a round of balls and festive gatherings that taxed her nervous system, vigorous as she was, and made sad inroads upon her time. She literally found time for nothing like study or thought. But study and thought were at a discount in the St. Johns mansion, where, during the season, life passed in a whirl of excitement and so-called pleasure. Not but what the country maiden enjoyed the change for a time; but her healthful habits were too strongly established to submit to such a complete subversion of former customs. It was a positive relief to her to steal away from the parlor, or easy room—where Mrs. St. Johns received her milliners and dressmakers, and indeed where she and her daughters spent a good part of their leisure—and have a good talk with Mr. St. Johns in the library, about some favorite author or some place which both had visited or known. The talk up-stairs about the gay world and its costumes, the petty scandal which is retailed among fashionable people, and empty small talk, was sometimes so unendurable that she felt as if she must go somewhere to breathe.

If people talk at all, it must of necessity be of what they know, and the light surface life of gay city dwellers affords much material for conversation in the form of amusing society episodes and personal peculiarities which obtrude themselves daily within the charmed circle. Then, again, the drawing-rooms of fashionable life are by no means barren of intellect or destitute of thinkers, for these are some of the many fields in which thinkers glean, and some of the brightest utterances, most brilliant flashes of genius and keen mental scintillations—veritable coruscations of wit and fancy—are thrown off during these moments of

relaxation and leisure, when the brain is stimulated by the dazzling surroundings. Yes, the subtlest play of the imagination is often witnessed on such occasions, but it is usually the offering of some casual visitor at the shrine, not that of the constant devotee.

Like the rare floral ornaments often seen at such places, the rich products of very different conditions than those presented by the glare and gas and impure unhealthy atmosphere—so the intellectual jewels and flowers of thought occasionally delighting one at fashionable gatherings, are usually from afar, the products of solitude, the study, the solitary ramble amid nature's own oracles—the healthy offspring of careful observers and profound reflectors. These occasional pilgrims to the temples of pleasure, these whilom perusers of the motley page, these laughing philosophers, furnish condiments which season what would otherwise be a very insipid dish, even to those who by daily partaking have inured their palates to its flavor.

"You must really persuade your father to sell the 'Hermitage,' my dear, and come and live in the city. It is not safe for you there. Just think of two robberies in one season, and then your detention or imprisonment. There now, don't be excited, I must call it by its right name, for those people couldn't be really friends when they would not allow you to inform your friends of your whereabouts. Friends indeed! enemies I should call them, to keep you from your own father and other friends who were almost frantic to find you."

"But, my dear Mrs. St. Johns, I could have left the very next day had I so chosen ; besides, you know, a bird unwillingly kept in a cage doesn't often return after being released, and I have been to see these enemies, as you term them, and had a most enjoyable visit."

"No, Elsie, don't tell me that you went to see those people again. It cannot be possible," said the horrified lady,

rising in her astonishment from the fauteuil in which she had been reclining ; the young ladies in various easy attitudes and negligé costumes, sitting near, engaged in fancy work.

"Oh, mamma, how delightful! How I should like to have gone with you, Elsie. Do tell us all about it!" said Alfarina, clasping her hands enthusiastically. Angelina, whose curiosity was as strong as her sister's, thought it necessary to look reproachfully at her.

"Alf, how can you talk that way ; besides, Elsie is still bound by her promise, no doubt," the latter words uttered with the delicate sarcasm for which she was noted.

"But, my darling, did your father know all about it? Surely you didn't venture alone?"

"I would have gone alone," said Elsie, simply; "but I didn't know the way, and so Hiram—you remember Hiram —conducted me."

"Hiram, that great awkward ogre! I cannot believe that you went alone to a strange place with him. I wouldn't trust him as far as I could see him."

Elsie looked hurt. "Mrs. St. Johns, I would go with him to China, and would trust him with my life anywhere. He is fidelity itself."

"Fidelity long drawn out," interrupted Alf. "I beg your pardon, Elsie; go on."

"Long fidelity at any rate," resumed Elsie, smiling at the sally, "for I have known him all my life."

"Yes, my dear, but it is so different knowing such people as a child and knowing them as a young lady. I daresay he is very honest, and all that, but he is certainly no fit companion for you. You must let me speak to you plainly, for you have no mother, and I regard you as a daughter."

"Thank you very much, Mrs. St. Johns, but really you cannot understand Hiram as I do, and father thinks almost as much of him."

It was the renewal of an old battle, for Hiram was no favorite with the St. Johns family. To them he was a gaunt, uncouth, crafty sort of wild man of the woods, and they could not possibly understand him, as they only looked on his exterior, and that was unattractive enough. City people almost necessarily have a different standard of comparison for humanity from country folks. For in the country, employers come into more direct and personal contact with their employés, and with the working classes generally, than is possible in the city, and the man or woman is judged and estimated less for their appearance than for their qualifications. Elsie's training had given her this deeper knowledge, this insight, and she knew that there was more genuine humanity and true manhood under the trapper's rough exterior than under many a fine city gentleman's expensive and elegant attire. Indeed, she vastly preferred the common sense utterances of many of these rustics, with whom she was often brought into conversational contact, to the vapid, silly simperings of the ordinary society beaux. She rather enjoyed setting society at defiance, and while her instincts always saved her from doing anything really unladylike, yet she frequently broke the conventional rules and usages, especially where they trenched too closely on the liberty of her sex.

It was keen enjoyment to her to witness the aghast manner in which poor Mrs. St. Johns, who was trammelled hand and foot by society—a slave of etiquette—listened to her description of the visit to the cave. The meeting the hunter on the lonely moor, and following his lead so far, and then the climax—horror of horrors !—binding the eyes with the silk, and permitting herself to be led blindfolded through the darkness into the dwelling. To the sisters it was like a fairy tale. Alf loudly expressed her delight, while Miss St. Johns preserved a discreet silence and demure air.

"It is really dreadful, my child ! Why, if this was known

your reputation would suffer terribly ; your father must be mad to permit such things. I must write to him at once."

"He knows all about it, for I told him, and some day I am going to take him with me—at least the Patriarch said I might after a while."

"The who ?" ejaculated both girls, at once. "Who did you say—the patriarch—who's the patriarch ?"

Elsie blushed, conscious of having made a slip of the tongue, but immediately answered, "Oh, I mean the old gentleman who owns the establishment."

But they were in great glee at having, as they thought, captured part of the secret which she had guarded so sedulously during all these months ; and so the patriarch was frequently on their lips, Roland especially asking her on all occasions when she had heard from the patriarch, etc.

The city visit was cut short, however, for at the beginning of the third week, Elsie received a note from her father, saying that Dr. Seaman and his English friends were in New York, and expected to be at the Hermitage by the end of the week. Mr. Thompson, it seemed, was accompanied by both his daughters, Ellen having, at Seaman's urgent solicitation, agreed to join the party at almost the last moment. Mrs. Thompson would not venture on the voyage, and so was to take advantage of the vacation to visit an only sister living in Newcastle, who had long been urging her to visit Northumberland and the lake district. It seemed the party had stood the voyage well, and were in the best of spirits.

So Elsie decided to go home at once, to play hostess, in spite of the remonstrances of the St. Johns family, who wished the Thompson and Seaman party had been detained by adverse winds, so that they could not so soon rob them of their guest. At least this was Roland's gallant sentiment, and there was no dissentient voice. However, Elsie felt she must go, and go she did, arriving home the day before the guests were expected.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### TRANS-ATLANTIC VISITORS.

"Well, Cousin Elsie, it seemed as if I never was going to see you again," said Dr. Seaman, saluting the young hostess on both cheeks in a truly cousinly manner. "Mr. Thompson, let me make you acquainted with the best girl in the world—that is," glancing quickly toward the young Englishwomen, "in the western world."

"Too late, Dr. Seaman; but really, from the glowing accounts he has given us of you, Miss Hastings, he should be ashamed to try and qualify his remark," said Louisa, as she and her sister were cordially greeted by Elsie.

The travellers were rather fatigued by their journey from the metropolis, and readily agreed to the suggestion of the young hostess to retire for a couple of hours to their rooms, and come down to a five o'clock dinner, it now being about three.

"Do not disturb yourselves until you hear the bell, which will ring half an hour before the dinner is served, giving you ample time to make your toilet," said Elsie, as she left the sisters in their apartment.

Five o'clock, or rather half-past five—for Elsie purposely delayed the dinner to give the guests another half-hour's rest—found the whole party at the table; and a very merry party they were, indeed. Anecdotes to relate of the voyage, impressions of the new world, and the differences in customs and manner, giving abundant material for light, easy conversation, kept all tongues busy. The genial Englishman and Mr. Hastings having met once before in London, nat-

urally enjoyed the occasion, while the young ladies and Seaman kept up an unceasing fusilade across the table.

"Why didn't you answer my last letter, Elsie? I have a bone to pick with you about that; and such a beautiful letter as it was, too."

"Such a letter, so full of conceit and assurance. I really didn't feel myself worthy to write to such a dignified individual."

"You wouldn't have thought him conceited if you'd seen him last Wednesday, during the storm, Miss Hastings; pale as a ghost, and so woe-begone," remarked Louisa, while her sister looked at him commiseratingly.

"Yes, I'm sure, poor fellow, you would have forgiven him all his sins had you seen him, Miss Hastings."

"Really, your sympathy repays me for all I endured, Miss Ellen; I confess I must have been a sorry-looking mortal, for I felt bad enough. However, Neptune has no more claims on me; I paid him in full of all demands."

"But were you not sick, Miss Thompson, or your sister; surely you did not escape?"

"Let me tell the story, Elsie," returned Seaman, quickly; "Miss Ellen, I verily believe, was not sick at all; one of the lucky few, but Miss Louisa, well—but I'd better not tell."

"You didn't see me sick once, sir, and I was on deck every day. Don't mind your cousin, Miss Hastings, he's only trying to spoil my record as a worthy seaman."

"If you were not sick, how was it that you only appeared at dinner during the last three days?"

"Because I didn't like the cooking, and the odor of the saloon was nauseating, but you only make the charge from hearsay, not being present yourself to note my absence."

"Miss Ellen, you must decide between us; I appeal unto Cæsar."

"Knowing very well that Cæsar herself was not at din-

ner more than half the time, preferring to remain on deck; besides, he fondly imagines, Miss Hastings, that Ellen would be sure to notice him whether she was aware of my presence or not."

"Indeed, I think you were a pretty sick pair, and I can't give either of you much credit for sea-going qualities," said Ellen, quietly.

"That's right, Ellen. You and I were the only sailors of the party," remarked Mr. Thompson, "but we really had some most abominable weather, although we made uncommonly good time."

Mr. Thompson after dinner walked about the Hermitage grounds with his host, and pronounced it a most delightful place. "But what a singular style of house; it seems to belong to no special order of architecture. When was it built?"

"About seventy years ago, or rather more than that, for it is almost fifty years since the builder sold it, after occupying it himself for many years. I judge it must be fully eighty years old."

"The man who built that mansion, Mr. Hastings, was no common man, or at least I should say, it was erected with no common object in view. Why, it bears some resemblance to an old-fashioned dagger in shape."

"Oh, no, surely not; I always supposed it was meant to resemble a cross."

"Take my word for it, the man who erected your house had more faith in daggers than crosses. Don't you see the point, I don't mean of my remark, but of the dagger?"

On close inspection the proprietor acknowledged the point, for the long building behind, which formed the blade of the dagger, according to Mr. Thompson, and the stem of the cross, according to the hitherto accepted view, was really brought to a curving point, although it had not been specially noticed before by anyone, so far as the

present proprietor knew, and during the summer was almost hidden from view by dense shrubbery. The Englishman was much elated by his discovery and manifested a little pardonable vanity in dwelling on it.

"I am naturally antiquarian in my tastes, Mr. Hastings, and my father before me, too, had the same fancy for the antique, and as a boy I used to go poking about old abbeys and ruins in studying them, and tracing up the history of such places, by the windows as they successively changed from a mere slit or arrow shape, through succeeding stages of architectural development, to the arch and other graceful forms of later days."

"Elsie, Mr. Thompson has made quite a discovery on our old place here."

"Indeed! why, I supposed everything was known that could be known about it."

"Let me ask you, Miss Elsie, what shape or form you think this building is?"

"Our house! why, a cross; I think it can be seen quite clearly if you stand on the knoll at the end of the garden."

"No, Miss, you're wrong, quite wrong; it's a dagger, and a foreign dagger, too."

"A dagger! Why, the end of the stem is too round or blunt for a dagger, Mr. Thompson; surely you must be mistaken!"

"Ah, my dear, that is what has served to deceive you all. The dagger is in a sheath, which is generally blunt or curved at the extremity."

"Let us go and see this discovery of father's," said Louisa, springing up, and all passed through the library window into the garden, led by Elsie, who was as eager as anybody to verify the statement if possible. On ascending the mound they obtained an excellent side view of the house and all agreed at once that the intention of the arch-

itect was one of the two forms named, but they were about equally divided as to which one. The three ladies held for the cross, although Elsie conceded that her conviction was not so strong as before, since the possibility of the dagger form had been suggested, while the host now fully agreed with his guest, and marvelled that he had not observed it earlier.

"I suppose I heard someone say it was a cross and took it for granted that he knew," remarked the proprietor. "I sometimes think that more than half that we have been accustomed to accept as true on the say so, or teachings, of others, would, if thoroughly examined and tested, be found to be without any reasonable foundation."

"Yes," assented the Englishman, "and if people began to use their faculties and weigh evidence, how much of the accepted doctrines, dogmas, dicta, and hitherto considered facts in popular systems of sociology, politics, etc., would last a month?"

"Truth, with a large admixture of error, has seemingly always been the food of mankind, and it may be that the mental and moral digestion would not tolerate the pure article, at least at this stage of development, no more than the physical system seems able to assimilate foods or carry on its digestive process thoroughly without a certain proportion of waste material mixed with it," returned Mr. Hastings.

"But you gentleman seem to think that you have established your point—your dagger point, I mean—whereas you are only a minority, the majority, the intelligent majority, still holding on to the cross," archly insisted Louisa.

"But here comes Dr. Seaman, fresh from his after-dinner ramble," said her father. "Seaman, what does this building remind you of?"

"If I were still in Europe I should say a cross, but here it would seem singular to build a private house in such a

form unless the man was very 'high church' indeed, or else a Roman Catholic."

"But it was built, so far as I can find out, by a Russian," said his uncle.

"Was it? Then undoubtedly it is meant for a cross, for that is the commonest symbol in Russia."

"Let me shake hands with you, Dr. Seaman," said Louisa, with mock gravity, after a little peal of triumph had been uttered by the ladies. "I knew you could tell a cross from a weapon of war."

In vain Mr. Thompson tried to point out the suggestions of ornamental clasps as shown in the stone-work, also the scroll-work where the blade entered the sheath. "Yes, and here is a circular projection to represent the ring by which the dagger was attached to the person." It was no use; the majority, exulting in their new ally, refused to be converted.

Elsie, however, after the mention of the Russian origin of the building, could not help thinking of a certain picture, evidently an allegorical composition, in which a dagger of curious workmanship was shown piercing the centre of a blood-red circle. She remembered this as one of the strange things hanging on the walls of the cave, and she could not help wondering if all Russians preferred the cross exclusively as a symbol.

The inmates of the Hermitage were delighted with their new guests, and tried in every way to make their visit a pleasant one. They intended visiting Niagara Falls and other prominent points, and even, if time allowed, to cross the continent and see the Yosémite and other wonders of California and the Pacific coast. Elsie and the young Englishwomen agreed charmingly, and after Ellen's reserve wore off, so that her true, gentle nature could be appreciated at its full value, Elsie became greatly attached to her, and she half suspected a certain cousin of hers held similar or warmer sentiments toward the fair Briton.

Elsie and Seaman were one day conversing by themselves, and they soon found they had touched on an old but favorite topic—the adaptability of different temperaments to each other. Elsie mischievously hinted that, in spite of his theories, she expected soon to have á new cousin in the person of the frank, energetic young Englishwoman with whom he had had the adventure, as narrated in his letter. "I know it will be a struggle between your philosophy and your affections, Cousin Warren, but when did philosophy get the better of love?" she laughingly asked him.

"You mean that Louisa and I resemble each other, being of similar dispositions and temperament? That is true, my sapient cousin, for we are both of the vital temperament, and of the sanguine persuasion."

"Then she is not your—what is that learned expression of yours that you were so fond of?"

"Physiological complement," interposed her cousin.

"Oh, yes, physiological complement. Then she is not your 'physiological complement?' Upon my word, that is a pretty pet name to apply to a young lady. I think I must tell Louisa."

"But I told you she was not my physiological complement," persisted Seaman.

"Then how dare you pay court to a lady who is not your 'physio. com.,' which is short for the jaw-twisting phrase?" quickly remarked Elsie.

"Prove it. I deny the allegation and defy the allegator."

"Well, then, I know who is your p. c., and it may be you have been trying to throw sand in my eyes, you sly boots, you. The young lady has a sister, and it may be that with her, love and philosophy can harmonize. I shall watch you, sir," pointing her finger at him mischievously.

Under her seri-o-comic look of accusation she was delighted to see the color spring to her cousin's face, and

indeed for a moment he seemed utterly nonplussed by her change of base, but he soon resumed the defensive.

"My dear Elsie, even your bright optics may not be sharp enough under such severe conditions; let me offer you a pair of eye-glasses for the purpose in view," at the same time producing a queer looking pair of magnifying lenses from his pocket.

"Don't trouble yourself, sir. What my eyes cannot detect in this matter won't be of much account; besides, I may enlist some other optics, as you call them, in this noble service."

"Success to you, fair coz, and when you find out my p. c. please introduce me."

Dr. Seaman listened favorably to his uncle's suggestion that he should open an office at Melville, although he concluded not to decide until thorough investigation had been made. He was much discouraged at first by the number of physicians already located, but Mr. Hastings soon showed him that this drawback was more apparent than real. From various causes, which have been alluded to before, the bulk of the practice had fallen into the hands of about five men, who were most of the time crowded with work. The newcomer might have up-hill work for a few months, but the prospect was that at the expiration of a year he would be in active practice.

"The truth is, as I think I mentioned in my letter, we are in a sort of crisis with regard to our medical men here, and a good, conscientious, temperate physician coming in will have nearly as good a chance as the older practitioners. Several of our doctors have been spoiled by success and fallen into bad habits, and the best families will not employ them. Even if they should reform it would be long ere they could regain the confidence of the community, and in any case would probably do better in a new place," said the owner of the Hermitage when his nephew approached him on the matter.

Seaman was not at all familiar with the neighborhood, having only been there once before for a couple of weeks when a boy, but Elsie, knowing the region thoroughly, soon posted him concerning everything of importance, and they and the two English girls had a variety of most delightful walks and drives far and near, so that he soon felt quite at home.

"Uncle," asked he at dinner one day, "I think this is the only place I have ever seen, that is a private residence, having a circular enclosure. The house is in the centre of a perfect circle, and yet you have straight fences enclosing the entire property, which seems to be square or rectangular."

"I noticed the same thing as the doctor, and was a little curious about this circular fence. I confess I rather like it, for it is uncommon. How much land have you enclosed in the circle?" queried the English guest.

"Somewhere about fifteen acres," returned the host, "but the circle was not my own choice. I found it so enclosed and left it. It was a whim of the former proprietor, the man who built the dwelling."

"I do not wonder at your leaving it alone, uncle, for it would have been a formidable thing to have removed or altered a solid stone wall like this which composes the circle."

"No doubt that was the chief reason for its remaining undisturbed," said his uncle, "for Mr. Whitely, from whom I purchased the place thirty years ago, told me it was always an eye-sore to him, as it made his fields such awkward shapes."

"I notice the wall seems to have been painted on the inside; rather a useless expense, I should think, for a stone wall," remarked Mr. Thompson.

"True, and of all colors in the world, it was originally painted red, which Mr. Whitely, on taking possession, covered with a deep brown, and occasionally I have given it a

coat of the same color; but, as you say, it is a useless expense, and I do not think I shall continue it."

Elsie, who had listened to the latter part of the conversation with dilated eyes, observed eagerly, as her father ceased speaking:

"Mr. Thompson, I am a convert to your opinion. I am satisfied that this house was built intentionally in the form of a dagger."

"Bravo! Miss Elsie," said the guest. "I knew a sensible girl like you would take the right side eventually. Now the rest of you had better surrender while the door of mercy stands open."

"Why, Elsie, what has brought you round so suddenly? But we don't propose to abandon our colors in any such dastardly manner, do we, young ladies?" asked Seaman.

"No, indeed," returned Louisa; "'Britons never will be slaves.' We stand by the cross."

"An evangelical sentiment, even if not necessarily a patriotic one," said her father.

"Elsie, you said you were satisfied that the house was intentionally built in the form of a dagger. Will you explain what you mean by intentionally?" asked Mr. Hastings, regarding his daughter keenly.

She blushed painfully, and hesitated for an instant. Her cousin, perceiving her embarrassment, came to the rescue.

"Oh, uncle, isn't it a little cruel to ask any young lady for an explanation of her emphatic utterances. She wished merely to impress her hearers that she had a reason for changing her mind, which, some wicked people say, is a little unusual with the fair sex."

Elsie looked half gratefully and half saucily at her cousin, as she answered, "Well, father, I did think I saw a reason for the building taking this shape, but, as it is a mere surmise, I had better verify it before making it public." She

really felt thankful to Warren for so dexterously giving her time to recover herself, though she was well aware that her explanation would not satisfy him.

"I wish Dr. Seaman would give us his authority for the quotation he used with reference to woman's reasons," Louisa Thompson remarked, with an assumption of offended dignity.

"I really cannot do it, but it is a common saying that no woman ever gives a reason for changing her mind."

"Ah! a very different thing from not having a reason. Men cannot always be trusted, and so wise women keep their own counsel, which probably exasperated some weak-headed individual of the sterner sex into originating this saying, which is so greedily seized on and quoted by his brethren."

This reply produced considerable merriment at the table, especially when Seaman replied:

"Weak-headed individual and his brethren! Isn't that a little personal?"

"Present company excepted, of course," Ellen said, quietly, looking at the doctor.

"That depends on the motive which prompted the quotation. If an evil one, then I move that the sentiment of the valiant defender of her much-abused sex stand approved as delivered, and no exceptions be allowed, present or absent," promptly answered Elsie to Mr. Thompson's great delight, who shouted:

"Bravo! bravo! no chance for you, Seaman, not one bit, unless you apologize."

Seaman tried to look comically penitent and at once disclaimed any evil intent whatever in his remarks, but Louisa declared that there was a vicious look in his left eye which flatly contradicted what his lips uttered, and urged that his apology be refused. It was finally agreed on, at Mr. Hastings' suggestion, that he be condemned to pay a penalty

commensurate with the offence, said penalty to be decided by the young ladies after mature deliberation.

The next morning the guests started on a two or three weeks' trip to Niagara and the West, accompanied by Dr. Seaman, and the inmates of the Hermitage found themselves again alone.

The curious coincidence of the red-painted circular fence and the dagger-shaped building in its centre, with the picture in the cave, caused Elsie much reflection. She felt now that at the dinner-table she had rather hastily drawn a conclusion on insufficient data; yet the more she thought the subject over, the more she doubted its being a mere coincidence. But she regretted her rash expression, which she was aware had much surprised her father, although he made no subsequent allusion to it. His confidence touched her deeply, and she longed for the time to arrive when she could tell him everything and no longer have any secret from him. There had been such very open relations between them in the past that the present imposed reticence was peculiarly irksome to her. She now felt almost feverishly impatient for another visit to the cave so that she could examine the picture again and find out something about it also, and, more important still, that she could in some way or another contrive that her father and the "Refugee," for so he had spoken of himself, should meet, and her beloved parent share the confidence in relation to these interesting strangers which she herself enjoyed.

## CHAPTER XV.

### FACE TO FACE AT LAST.

"Good morning, Mr. Hastings," said a memory-rousing voice, as that gentleman was about to enter his grounds after a brisk early walk in the balmy spring air. "Might I detain you for a few moments before you go to the house?"

"I remember your voice, but cannot recall your name nor face," said the owner of the grounds in a puzzled way, as he sharply regarded the other.

The stranger raised one hand to his long flowing gray beard and the other to his cap and both disappeared in a twinkling, and the astonished observer beheld the calm, resolute features and bushy head of the English detective who had first called upon him. Mr. Hastings recoiled a step and then advanced almost threateningly, as the other thought.

"What do you do here? What do you want with me? Have you come to prepare for another robbery of my premises?"

"Pardon me, Mr. Hastings, my intrusion on you, and I will pardon your remark. I regret to know that you have again suffered at the hands of that accomplished villain, but surely you are not justified in connecting me with your misfortunes."

"Did you not call on me a few weeks ago and make various inquiries, leading me to believe that you were an English Bow Street officer, a special detective sent out here to arrest a notorious criminal who had escaped from Brit-

ish justice, and who, furthermore, you declared had undoubtedly robbed my desk?"

The other merely assented by nodding his head, at the same time restoring his cap and beard to their former places. The gentleman went on:

"After taking full notes of everything connected with the desk robbery, you left, saying that in a few days you might return and question the servants, especially the governess."

The other again assented.

"A week later another detective" (and here the speaker emphasized the word scornfully) "called on me and representing himself as your colleague, did, with my permission, examine the housekeeper to such good effect that, a few nights later, my dwelling was entered and thoroughly robbed, and by parties who knew the premises and had carefully laid and executed their plans on information previously obtained."

The countenance of the visitor as the narration proceeded, so far as could be told, concealed as it was by the great beard and slouched cap, expressed unbounded surprise, succeeded by a smile of satisfaction or admiration, the irritated and indignant observer could hardly tell which, as Mr. Hastings told of the visit of his colleague and subsequent successful robbery. As the narrator paused, almost choked with anger, which his strong self-control could hardly keep within bounds, the stranger burst out with:

"By George, that was the sharpest trick I ever heard of. I'm blessed if it isn't."

"I don't doubt it. Of course, you admit it, and consider it very cleverly done. Pray, what share of the proceeds did you receive?"

"I understand you perfectly, my dear sir, and pardon your suspicions. In fact, after hearing your story I don't wonder at them at all, but, the truth is, this clever rascal has stolen a march on me, and actually, while in the very

meshes of the law which he has so frequently outraged again and again, has played a successful ruse worthy of Napoleon. I respect him for it, Mr. Hastings. I always admire the man who can outwit me."

This was said with an undisguised professional admiration of the sharp trick which had been played, that half disarmed his hearer for the moment.

"In your enjoyment of the success of your accomplice you forgot to answer my question as to your share in the proceeds, or swag, as, I believe, you gentlemen call it?"

The detective regarded the speaker with a twinkle in his eye, which denoted ill-suppressed merriment, but without the slightest shade of resentment at the insulting imputation, and then, seemingly mastering his risibilities by an effort, answered:

"Mr. Hastings, can you in common reason suppose that, were I '*particeps criminis*' in this affair, I would voluntarily put my head in the lion's mouth? Why, man, you could arrest me at once on suspicion and so defeat all my plans. No, sir, you have been deceived by a consummate actor and thief, who, knowing of my presence in this country, and surmising its object, and also knowing, by some means which I cannot at present divine, of my visit to your house, determined to circumvent me by a master-stroke, and fill his pockets at the same time."

"Then you disclaim any connection with this thieving gang, and still insist that you are a *bona fide* detective?"

"Most emphatically I do, and if you will accompany me to my hotel in Melville, where my valise is, I think I can satisfy you by unmistakable evidence of the truth of what I aver."

"Well, then, I must hold my judgment in suspense, but warn you that I can hold no official relations with you, nor admit you again to my house on any pretext whatever, until I am fully satisfied of the truth of your claims. You must concede that I am justified in this course by recent events."

"All right, but I shall take it as a favor if you will afford me an early opportunity of verifying what I have stated, as in your capacity of J. P. I may have to apply to you for authority to make some arrests before long. To be frank with you, a gang of English burglars and forgers have crossed the ocean, and I am one of four detectives who are in pursuit, with the intention of extraditing them as speedily as possible. They have engaged in profitable work here, as the entry on your premises clearly shows."

"But why not arrest them at once, if you know them, and also where they are, as you certainly stated to me at our first meeting?"

"For several reasons, of which the principal is, that our chief, with the necessary documents to authorize arrest and application for extradition, has not yet arrived, and so all we can do is to watch the game."

"But why not arrest them on suspicion and hold them until your chief arrives? Perhaps I asked you the question before, but have forgotten your answer."

"You did, and I will answer more fully than I did on that occasion. If I did arrest these men, they would immediately fee a couple of your sharp, tricky lawyers who would dare me to produce my proofs, and these not immediately forthcoming, the magistrate would release the prisoners at once, and then our game would be up; for, having been compelled to show our hands, all chances of success would be gone. Now I have been frank with you, which is an unusual thing for a detective, I assure you; but I trust to your honor that everything that has passed between us will be kept sealed in your own breast, and I on my part in return for such favor will leave no effort unmade to restore you your property and convict the robbers."

So saying the officer or robber, whichever he was, raised his cap, saying, "*Au revoir*," and departed leaving his hearer in serious doubt whether it was not his duty as a

magistrate to endeavor to secure his arrest and detention until he could prove his identity. However, the strong doubt in the man's favor, which had been increasing during the last few moments of conversation with him, paralyzed any such intention in the gentleman's mind until it was too late to put it in execution.

On Mr. Hastings' return to the house, he found Elsie in her walking-dress, apparently just waiting his arrival before starting out.

"Father, I just waited to say good-by, as I shall probably not return until evening."

"Why, my child, isn't this a rather sudden freak? I thought you were to spend to-day in the garden arranging those new flower-beds?"

"So I was; but Hans brought me a note from an old friend, who wishes to see me, and so I thought I would postpone the flower-beds until to-morrow—that is, if you don't mind."

The fact was, Hans since early morning had been watching and making sundry sly visits to the house on one pretext or another, in the hope of seeing his young mistress alone, in order to deliver to her the precious note intrusted to him by Gretchen, with many cautions to give it to no one but Miss Elsie, and when no one else was looking.

"Now Hans, mein one son, you tooken dis lettaire to Meese Elsie und put ento her hands youself. An den, Hans, your mudder will haf somedings goot for you dis nacht."

And Hans, who was very fond of "somedings goot," resolved that Miss Elsie should have that letter, and no one else. Hans, under Mr. Hastings' new system with him, had managed to keep sober longer than since he became his own master, and was doing very fairly as under-gardener and man of all work. The truth was, that Hans was merely one of a large class who are decent people so long

as they are under rigid discipline, but who have not developed yet to the point where they can control their appetites and govern themselves.

Grown-up children are not by any means uncommon—that is, people in adulthood, with all the child's ungoverned impulses, with none of the controlling power which maturity commonly gives. It becomes a nice question whether the state should not stand *in loco parentis* to such unfortunates, and keep them in leading-strings of legislative control, so enmeshing them by legal bonds that they cannot go very far astray ; controlling, too, with iron hand the scoundrels who reap a golden harvest by pandering to the weaknesses of their fellows.

Elsie's letter was from the patriarch, asking her to visit them again, as he had something to communicate to her which he knew she wished to hear, and saying that the same arrangements would be made to conduct her to the cave as before. It particularly asked her to come on the day of receiving the letter, if possible ; otherwise, the following day at the same hour. Elsie was too anxious for another visit to delay, and so prepared at once, merely awaiting the arrival of her parent before starting.

"Elsie, my dear child, I know it is something in which you are much interested, or you would not give up our garden plan ; but to-morrow will answer just as well for the plants. May you have a pleasant journey to the unknown, for I suppose it is there."

"O father, you don't know how anxious I am to bring this secrecy to an end between us. However, I hope something will grow out of this visit."

The young woman soon reached the same point where Hiram had been awaiting her before ; but this time no Hiram appeared.

Was she too early, or had the trapper forgotten ? Yet she felt certain that the faithful fellow would sooner have waited

all day than put her to the inconvenience of waiting ten minutes. Presently in the distance she saw some one coming, and she sat down on a convenient log to await the hunter's arrival.

"It is about the same time as before," she said to herself, looking at her watch ; something must have hindered him. But as the traveller appeared, she became doubtful if it really was the "Giraffe."

"No, it is not Hiram. Who can it be? I have surely seen that figure before—that firm, strong walk, that rather proud bearing."

A moment more, and the new-comer had raised his cap in salute, revealing the strong, manly features of the energetic stranger, whose skill and courage had proved so efficient on the night of the fire.

"Miss Hastings," he said with a smile, but somewhat diffident air, rather at variance, she thought, with the calm self-reliance which had excited her admiration at their former interview. She started up impulsively, and offered her hand.

"How glad I am to have an opportunity at last of thanking you for your courage and tact in helping us from that terrible fire! My father has long wished to meet you and thank you, and so have I."

His face glowed with evident pleasure as he grasped the extended hand.

"Believe me, Miss Hastings, no commendation goes so far as yours in rewarding me for the little I was able to do on that occasion."

"I don't know what we should have all done, if it had not been for your self-control and presence of mind. Why did you go away so abruptly, and gave no one a chance to thank you?"

"I will tell you as we go along, for I believe we walk in the same direction."

"Do we?" she said, with a puzzled air; "I came here to meet a friend," and here she hesitated, as if in doubt.

"And are not quite satisfied to take a substitute," he said, anticipating, as it were; but immediately added:

"Oh, no, I do not mean that; but you would like to know by what authority I claim to be a substitute."

A new thought struck her.

"Did you really come here in place of ——?"

"Hiram," he supplied quickly with a meaning smile. "Yes; and although I can never hope to equal the gallant 'Giraffe' in his manifold accomplishments, yet if Miss Hastings will trust me, I will do my best to lead her safely to her destination."

"But do you know where I am bound for?" she asked quizzingly.

"To the cave to see the 'Exile' and Nadia and Sophia," he answered promptly, looking at her fixedly, as if to note her surprise and the effect of his words. She was indeed surprised—so much so that for a moment she could not find words to respond.

"So you know them too. Is it possible? How strange! I thought they had no acquaintances outside."

"Neither have they, so far as I know, with the welcome exception of yourself," he returned, still regarding her with that meaning glance which she could not understand.

She felt bewildered, almost irritated, like one who has lost the way, and still in the darkness gropes painfully for the path. All at once a great light burst upon her, and her countenance fairly beamed as she uttered, confidently, "Then you must be Mr. Adolph—are you not?"

"I have that honor; for it is an honor to bear a name so kindly remembered by Miss Hastings."

"How glad I am at last to meet one, face to face, to whom I am under such obligations!"

"Please don't use that word—please don't; it jars on my

feelings painfully. It was the star-pleasure of my life to have been able to serve you. But if you can trust me now, suppose we move in the direction of the cave."

Cheerfully assenting, they moved forward in the direction she more than half-remembered; but, instead of leading some distance ahead, her companion walked by her side, busy answering her eager questions regarding her rescue from the ravine and removal to the cave.

So absorbed had she been that she was startled when the gentleman halted abruptly, saying: "Miss Hastings, you are not afraid of the dark, are you? But I know you are not."

"Not a bit. This is the place for the handkerchief, I suppose. I don't mind at all. You know I have been through it before."

"I shall not bind your eyes, Miss Hastings, nor exact any pledge whatsoever; we feel quite safe in your hands."

"I really think you had better bind my eyes—please do."

"If you really prefer it, I will do so."

So saying, a silk bandage was produced and skilfully adjusted, and in a few moments she felt that they had quitted the upper air and were in the subterranean passage.

"Thank fortune, here we are, safe and sound; and this intrusive silk must cloud your bright eyes no longer, Miss Hastings," her companion said as they halted.

And Elsie found, with the restored sight, the familiar surroundings and the pleasant faces of the cave friends eagerly crowding round to greet her.

"Slava Bogu," said Nadia, while Sophia seized both hands of the visitor, saying in pretty fashion, with just a slight accent, "How are you—very good?"

Elsie kissed the little maiden, and then was warmly greeted by the venerable master of the underground house: "My daughter, pleasant as the spring to see you again. Adolph brought you safely?" looking with parental pride at the younger man.

"Yes, indeed, and I was so glad to meet Mr. Adolph at last, and to have a chance to thank him! You know how much I wanted to see him, and tell him of my gratitude;" then turning to Adolph, "You must allow me to ask you why you did not come to see me, or put in an appearance while I was here so long, or at my last visit."

"I will tell you as we are going home," he said evasively, coloring like a boy under her glance.

Indeed, she noticed the singular combination of confidence and diffidence, of courage and timidity in the character of this interesting stranger. She had an indefinite memory of observing a similar union of traits before, but could not quite recall where. She saw at once that Adolph was the idol of the cave-circle, and had a contagious good-humor that seemed to spread sunshine through the apartment.

Although it was late spring, the great fire still glowed in the fire-place; but the "Ancient" informed her, in answer to her exclamation of surprise at this, that it was necessary for ventilation and to keep away dampness.

"We keep some fire all summer, and find it very pleasant, too, in the evenings; for our cave is much cooler than any upperground house, and correspondingly warmer in winter."

"Father has shown the cave-rooms, or at least part of them, Miss Hastings; but perhaps you would like to see a new chamber which I have cleaned out since you were here," asked Adolph.

"Oh, thank you ever so much; I should, indeed."

"It is called the 'Harper's Grotto,'" said Adolph who led the way, the whole party following as if unwilling to lose a moment of the guest's presence with them.

It was some little distance from the suite of dwelling rooms, and was altogether the handsomest Elsie had yet seen. The formations were white as the purest Parian

marble, and indeed the first impression on the mind was that of a hall of superb statuary. In the centre was a facsimile of an enormous Irish harp with an ancient harpist, whose snowy locks streamed to his shoulders. So superbly realistic was this piece of natural statuary in outline that the visitor at first could not be persuaded that it was merely the work of blind force and accidental arrangement.

The entire scene was strangely weird and impressive; grand and awe-inciting beyond expression. These wonder-working agencies, these unseen sculptors, these invisible magicians, what were they, and where were they?

Elsie almost momentarily expected to see solemn spectres stalk majestically upon the scene out of the dim shady vacancy around, with tools and implements of artistic toil and begin chiselling and shaping and forming new creations of fancy, wild and strange. The room, or hall, or studio, whatever it might be called, looked precisely as if the workers had been suddenly surprised and had deserted the premises in alarm, leaving much unfinished work. Numerous uncompleted groups stood around, to which fancy soon gave shape and meaning—puzzling masses, with curious resemblances, which fantastically changed and varied as the spectator moved from point to point.

There is a peculiar sensation experienced in gazing on the singular formations, often met with in large caves, that is unique. There is something that at once appeals to the latent superstition in the blood when one gazes on these marvels, made without hands, in the inner parts of the earth, the work of ages and ages in the darkness and slime and damp. Blind, dead matter seems to have a purpose, an intention, and to be moved by an instinct. It appears to be feeling its way toward a higher stage, groping in the gloom for something which is suggested and hinted but never fully expressed.

Elsie could have passed hours in this strange place, if

she might have yielded to the fascination which it exerted over her.

"Better not remain too long in the damp atmosphere of this chamber. When the summer heats have penetrated the cave somewhat, and we have arranged a better ventilation, then come some time and spend as long as you like," said Adolph in a low tone.

The fire felt pleasant after the chilly air of the other parts of the cave, and dinner over, all gathered round for social enjoyment and converse with the welcome guest.

"You expressed great desire, my daughter, that we should meet your father, and I promised that I would give the matter attention and see if it would be possible?"

"Oh, yes, that is my dearest wish, if it can be arranged some way." Here she met Adolph's gaze and colored, she hardly knew why, unless it was at the admiration which she read in his expressive face.

"Yes, Miss Hastings, father and I have considered the matter with carefulness, and feel that your father is one of us in heart—that we can trust him."

"How kind of you to say so, and I am sure you are not mistaken," and her face glowed with filial pride as she spoke.

Suddenly her eyes rested on the symbolic picture hanging on the wall, before referred to, and the question she had determined to ask the "Refugee" sprang to her lips: "Would you mind explaining to me the meaning of that curious picture. I have seen something since that reminded me of it."

The two Russians exchanged significant glances.

"What have you seen, my child? Perhaps I can explain it for you."

She then told of the discussion relative to the shape of the house and the painted wall, and how she had been induced to change her opinion by the memory of this picture,

The father and son exchanged a few sentences in their native language, and then the elder, turning to the maiden with a pleasant smile, said: "You are a very intelligent young lady. Did you ever hear that one of my countrymen once owned your place?"

"Yes, I have heard father say so many times, but I never thought of it until they began talking about the house being in the shape of a dagger, and in a circle, and then I remembered about the picture, and the Russian gentleman who had built the house, and laid out the grounds, and I thought that possibly he might have belonged to the order you were telling me about."

During her excited, or rather animated, statement—for her cheeks were flushed and her eyes shone brightly, showing how interested she felt in the matter—the two, or indeed we might say the four, listeners sat earnestly regarding her. Nadia and her daughter, of course, could only guess at the subject under discussion, or from the few words passed between the two gentlemen might have partly understood it, but the Refugee and his son drank in every word with eagerness.

Elsie noticed by their manner that it was a matter which awakened profound feelings and stirred up far-reaching memories.

A few more words in Russian and then Adolph said gently, bending toward her: "Miss Hastings, the original owner of your property was a member of our noble band, the Brotherhood of the Red Circle. Yes, and, Slava Bogu, in spirit one of us, as ever."

This reverential allusion to one who while in the body was a member of the sacred Circle, and being absent from them, still, so the thought came to her, sympathized with their work, touched the visitor deeply. She felt strongly drawn toward these poor exiles from their native land, and a feeling of righteous indignation toward the cruel despotism

which had induced such a sacrifice. In her enthusiasm she felt that she would like to be a member of this order and help to relieve the oppressed and down-trodden from the tyrant's power.

"You say your father sympathizes with us—at least I understood you to say so at our last meeting?" asked the old man, earnestly.

As before, so now, she noticed that his frame seemed really to expand and grow, and his face seemed younger, when speaking upon this topic of the national interests and the Brotherhood.

"I know he has always had a warm feeling for your country and the oppressed masses there. As a true American, he holds kings and emperors as worthless figureheads, mere relics of a past blind worship of power, and belief in ruling by divine right, instead of by the will of the ruled."

"Expensive relics of a past barbarism indeed, but, worse than relics, they are engines of oppression and wrong," responded the young man, with kindling features. "If every throne in Europe were by the universal voice declared vacant to-morrow, and prompt measures taken to enforce the sentiment; if royalty in every form were buried with some other rubbish which we have inherited from the past, so deep that it could never be resurrected, what a boon it would be to the world." Pausing a moment, he resumed: "Why should millions and tens of millions of people be governed by the arbitrary will of one man, who has no more rational claim to exercise such authority than that, some time in the remote past, an undeveloped barbarous, or semi-barbarous, people chose one of their number to be their leader because he was more strong or capable than the others. For the possession of special personal qualities he was elected chief or king, and for special purposes, to lead in war, to guide in council, etc. But in the name of the beautiful and just, why should his descendants

have any claim to succeed him? The father elected for a special qualification thinks that his son, an ordinary individual, without any peculiar claim to attention, a mere nonentity, it may be, ought to succeed him, and that all of his lineage are to be henceforth accounted sacred; and the stupid, unreasoning people, after perhaps an unavailing protest, agreed to the outrage, and the usurpation became 'divine' by custom and usage. No man has any right to be a leader unless he has the special qualities of leadership, and these in excess of all others, and such leadership to be contingent on exemplary conduct, and also directly subject to the will of the people who gave him the power."

Adolph had spoken with much animation and natural eloquence, but he suddenly paused and seemed greatly vexed at having permitted himself to be thus led into such vehement expression of his feelings. "Forgive me, but I really feel so deeply on this point, Miss Hastings. We have suffered; that must be my excuse. I have said too much; will you forgive me?"

And the contrition of the speaker was so genuine that one hearer at least was very deeply touched by it, so she said, gently, "Mr. Adolph, if you knew how much interest I feel in these matters you would not think it necessary to make an apology. I like to hear you on these points, and shall be glad if you will speak freely on them."

His face kindled at her words and then quickly resumed its wonted condition of intelligent repose. It was a watching face, quiet and yet never dull or absent in expression—the eyes especially, deep hazel, ever on the alert, seemed to drink in everything that came within their range—a face that noticed everything without at all being intrusive or inquisitive.

"My daughter, what say you to your father paying us a visit? We know how irksome it must have been for you, through all these long months, keeping your knowledge of

us from your good parent, and so we have decided to extend our invitation to him to come and see us in our humble abode, if he will so far honor us." So saying, the patriarch took her hand and looking at her a moment gravely, added, "Will he come?"

Elsie was so glad that for an instant she did not speak, and then with a face glowing with satisfaction she responded: "Surely he will come, and I must thank you cordially for the invitation. Oh, it will take a burden off my mind, for I have been much troubled at being obliged to keep anything from so good a father as mine is."

"Will your father object, think you, my child, to coming in as you have come, with blinded sight, to our underground home?"

"I am sure he will not, if it is necessary;" and then as the possibility of her father objecting to this proceeding occurred to her, "that is, I do not think he will when I have explained to him the necessity for it."

"You must be told, Miss Hastings, that none but members of the order are permitted to enter by sight into our council-rooms. We would, on your father's, as well as your own account, that it were not so, but such is the law, from the Grand Synod down to the humblest Circle, governing all," said Adolph by way of explanation.

"So, I may tell my father everything; and when shall we come to see you?"

"Yes, you can tell him all you know of us, simply asking that he promise you not to reveal, and we feel quite safe in his honor. Come when you please."

Before leaving, Sophia confided to the young lady that Grandfather was giving her a daily lesson in English. "So I can do some talk when you come see me, and he say he teach me write English too," said the little maiden, whose eyes danced merrily at the thought of being able to know all that was said when her friend came.

So it was arranged that Elsie was to notify by letter, through Hiram's agency, when the residents of the Hermitage could make it convenient to visit them.

On the way home Adolph explained to Elsie why he had not appeared during her detention in the cave. "I could not bear to intrude myself upon you, as if I had earned a right to your acquaintance by the simple service I had been privileged to render you. My father was your physician, so it was different with him. I was only a poor Russian and had no right to intrude on the society of a young lady like Miss Hastings simply because accident had given me an opportunity." This was uttered with some personal pride, which could not escape notice, but at the same time with a simple dignity which became the speaker well.

Elsie replied, earnestly: "You do me wrong if you think I should have regarded your presence as an intrusion for one moment. How could you think so?"

"Miss Hastings, I cannot forget the difference in our social positions. Ordinarily, as things go, I could never have hoped to become acquainted with you. I had seen you scores of time, but never dreamed that I should ever be permitted to speak with you, our conditions being so very different."

She made a motion as if to interrupt him, but he went on doggedly, as if making a confession which tried him to the quick: "I belong to an ostracized class, having no rank or social position, or education, I may add, while you are wealthy, talented, highly educated, and of a first-class family. Can you wonder that I shrank from the task of trying to clear away such obstacles to your acquaintance, simply because I had by chance found a key that would admit me to your presence?"

"You really distress me by talking this way. If you think I value rank, or wealth, or social position, before courage and manliness you do not know me. My father

and I, believe me, have our own views on these points, and they are not those of the world." Then trying to see his face, which was averted, as he seemed to be struggling with some deep feeling which prevented his immediate response, she continued, cheerfully: "But I am very glad you took a kinder view of the matter, or I should not have had the pleasant visit I have so much enjoyed to-day."

"Hiram's absence necessitated someone taking his place to act as your guide, and my father's express command deprived me of all liberty of action in the case. Obedience is the foundation law of our order, and also sacred duty in Russian family life."

"But you surely do not mean to say that you will avoid my presence for the future in obedience to a false feeling? Surely there is no sacred obligation in such obedience as that!"

Deeply agitated, he answered: "Such was my intention, but Miss Hastings' presence and kindness this day have made such a course exceedingly difficult, and yet I feel it would be better and safer that I should so absent myself."

"Promise me that you will meet my father and myself freely until you know us better, and let the future decide matters," laying her hand upon his arm. "You saved me twice from peril, and you must continue to be my friend, and give me an opportunity to show you I am not ungrateful."

The touch and tone conquered him, she saw by the light which illuminated his countenance, but it was a full minute before he sufficiently controlled his voice to speak, and then the words quivered with emotion. "Obedience to you is easy; nay, disobedience is absolutely impossible. I tremble while I promise, but I cannot refuse." Then his mood suddenly changing, he drew himself up proudly, "We Russians are a hardy race, and are taught to fear nothing. So there, I cast my gauntlet to the future, and dare the Fates!"

So saying, he dashed his heavy mountain staff on the ground, and stood with folded arms regarding it grimly. Then picking it up hastily, he turned to his companion with a half-apologetic smile, saying, "'Scratch a Russian and you find a Tartar,' is an old proverb, and I fear Miss Hastings will think there is a good deal of the Tartar left in me."

She looked at him with an expression difficult to define, half surprise and half admiration ; he appeared at the moment so strong and manly, so fitted to encounter and overcome obstacles. "I like some of the Tartar traits, their courage, strength, and endurance make a fine basis on which to rear the superstructure of a noble manhood."

"Thank you," he exclaimed, impulsively taking her hand, and then dropping it instantly. "Forgive me, I forgot ; but you reconcile me to myself. I, too, would build such a character—I, too, would be a man."

She held out the hand so abruptly relinquished. "You are a man, and I have seen your courage, strength, and endurance tested," she returned gently, with shining eyes, looking him frankly in the face.

Eagerly taking the proffered hand he said impressively, "Then you will help me to build, and I may hope to be the rest?"

Dropping her eyes before his ardent gaze she responded, sadly, "Alas, I can only encourage and hint; I require constant help myself. But," she added gayly, "'Let us help one another,' as one of the old songs of childhood used to say."

So saying she bade him "good-evening," for her home was in sight, and so they parted.

Elsie rushed to the library hoping to find her father there. She felt indeed as if a burden had been taken from her shoulders, and the ground become elastic to her tread. Mr. Hastings smiled as she entered and kissed him fondly,

first on one cheek and then on the other. "Oh, father, I have had such a delightful day, and have such lots to tell you."

"Indeed you look radiant enough to have found the philosopher's stone, Elsie."

"Something better than the old philosopher's pebble, which if he had found would have been some poor affair after all. No, I have found something much better than that—some good, kind friends—and I have heard you say they were the best jewels in the world."

"So they are. A true friend is the real philosopher's stone, for it is friendship that gilds life and illumines the dark places."

"Well, I suppose I must dress for dinner, and after dinner we will come here, and I will tell you all the mysteries, so that you will know your daughter once more as you used to, and good-by to all secrets."

Dinner certainly occupied less time than usual that day, for one of the diners was too eager to tell, and the other hardly less eager to hear, the story which would unravel the mystery around Elsie's movements during the past six months.

As said before, Mr. Hastings' confidence in his daughter was implicit, but yet he had felt keenly the veil of reserve which had been between them on this matter since Elsie's accident, and now the prospect of a full explanation and clearing up of all the obscurity was very pleasant to him, so that he fully sympathized with her impatience to finish dinner.

"Now, you best of fathers, I must begin at the beginning and tell everything as it happened," said the young mistress of the mansion, as she arranged her father's big chair for him, and then seated herself in a low arm-chair near.

Graphically she related her experience from the moment

when she opened her eyes with returning consciousness in the cave, and as she proceeded she was delighted to find the listener was fully as much interested in hearing as she in telling. She reserved nothing, except perhaps her special conversations with Adolph, in which, she naturally reasoned, her father would have no peculiar interest.

"And you will go with me, father, and visit the cave? Oh, it is wonderful, and I know you would say it was a treat to go there."

"Elsie, what a girl you are, to be sure. Who would have dreamed of your having such an experience? What would Mrs. St. Johns say if she could know?" said her father, standing up and putting his hands on her shoulders. "To think of my daughter having such an adventure all alone, and among Russian Socialists—sanguinary fellows, with daggers and crosses, and red circles and assassinations, and I don't know what else. I believe you ought to have been a boy. Well, well, well!" Here he walked up and down the room laughing heartily.

"But they are the nicest people in the world, father, and not in the least sanguinary looking or acting."

"Especially Rudolphe," said her father, meaningly.

"There is no Rudolphe," she retorted.

"Oh no, Adolph; yes, that was the name, was it not—a sort of Chevalier Bayard, *sans peur et sans réproche;* eh, Elsie?"

She blushed in spite of herself, but answered gayly: "Yes, sir, he is, and you would say so too if you saw him; but you have seen him, for I quite forgot to say that it was Mr. Adolph that helped us out of the fire that night at the court-house."

"What! that brave young man! Is it possible? Then I shall form the acquaintance of Mr. Adolph with much pleasure. I should like to thank him."

Mr. Hastings, after hearing his daughter's story had ex-

perienced some internal vexation at the acquaintance she had apparently formed with Adolph, especially when in answer to his question she informed him that he had accompanied her home from the cave. It was that natural shrinking from the possibility which always looms up in the distance, of the cherished one straying into other pastures, and leaving the home-circle desolate. To one situated as Mr. Hastings—a widower with one child, and that a daughter, who was in a large sense his life—the mere possibility, be it ever so remote, of parting with her to another man, even if that other should be unexceptionable and the chosen of her heart, was torture to contemplate. And now, outside of his knowledge, she had met, in more or less intimate association, one who, although socially living in a totally different sphere, and by her own acknowledgment of very limited education and of a different race, had evidently impressed her profoundly.

The proprietor of the Hermitage was not in the ordinary sense a purse-proud or aristocratic man. On the contrary, he was peculiarly democratic in his sentiments and tastes ; but he had some of the Anglo-Saxon aversion to foreign blood, and although he despised himself for the feeling, yet fight against it as he would, the prejudice would spring up strongly every now and again.

Gratitude was a prominent virtue in him, as in his daughter, and as it is indeed in all noble minds, and he felt under the deepest obligation to these Russians for what they had so generously and bravely done for his child ; and to be able to reward them in some substantial manner would have delighted him, but somehow he shrunk from close and intimate association with them. Yet he could not deny to himself that if Adolph was not there to complicate matters as the strong, brave, manly fellow which he certainly must be, or if he was the husband of Nadia, or transformed somehow, he would enjoy meeting these exiles—could sympathize

heartily with them, and no thought of social position or foreign blood would enter his mind for a moment. But after a brief struggle with himself, his better nature gained the ascendency, and he wisely resolved not to meet troubles prematurely, but trust the future and the strong common-sense of his Elsie.

"We indeed are under infinite obligations to these Russians, and I shall be impatient until I form their acquaintance," he remarked cheerfully to his daughter, some time after the disclosure. "I am greatly relieved to find matters have been so simple and straightforward, although it is remarkable that such people under such peculiar circumstances could have existed in our very midst, and no one know anything about it, and more strange still that my daughter should be the instrument of bringing them to light."

"Not exactly bringing them to light, father; for the matter remains sacred between us two until such time as it may be publicly known without prejudice to the safety of these friends."

"Certainly, it is sacred with me, although I do not think there is the slightest danger after the lapse of so many years. Still it is, of course, best to be on the safe side."

"Father, suppose we go next Wednesday; we have nothing especial on hand for that day, and the Thompsons and cousin Warren may return at the end of next week, so we ought to go before they come. If you say so, I will leave word with Gretchen for next Wednesday."

"And must we be blindfolded to be admitted—I really don't like the idea of that?" asked her father, with some shrinking from that part of the proceeding.

"Of course, father. Why, there's nothing in that; I told you that the Patriarch said that no one not a member of the order could be admitted any other way."

"Oh, well, I must not mind if you do not. But Hiram

must be a member of the order, then. The sly fellow, how quiet he has kept things! Well, Elsie, say Wednesday, then. I am in your hands in this matter, my dear; do with me as you please."

That afternoon Elsie rode over to the trapper's cottage, and Gyp seemed to enjoy the trip as much as she did. It was a splendid black animal with a perfect head, and had been specially trained for her use. She found the good Dutch woman at home, as indeed she always was, except a very occasional visit to the Hermitage, or her sister's in Melville.

"Ach, mine Gott! an Mese Hastings come to see Gretchen. Und how is Mese Elsie dis morgan? I shoost was tinking mit you, and here you be come already."

Elsie followed the bustling little woman into the cottage, which was almost covered with the varied creeping plants which the industrious Teuton had carefully trained up the stone walls.

"Why, Gretchen, your cottage looks beautiful, and when these flowers come out later in the season it will be the prettiest place around."

Gretchen was delighted with this praise; for she was very proud of her little home, which indeed was admirably kept, and as neat inside as it was attractive out.

"Mese Elsie, Hans mein boy was to see his old mudder last nacht, und he is one fine feller, und he no treat any more. Yar yar, Meester Hastings, he know how to fix mit Hans;" and the fat, good-humored mother of Hans laughed until the tears rolled down her plump cheeks.

Elsie was rather puzzled to know how to communicate her message to the jovial woman so as to not excite awkward questions; for she was well aware that Gretchen was credited with having no inconsiderable share of that curiosity which is said to be characteristic of a part of the race. But she reasoned that in the nature of things, and judging by the familiar way in which the cave-dwellers spoke of

her, the worthy cottager must know a good deal about matters, and probably knew the inmates of the underground residence.

"Gretchen, I have a letter which I was asked to leave with you. It is for the gentleman who wrote the one you brought me on Monday."

Gretchen glanced up with a comical intelligence, and laughed again merrily. "Ach, yes, it's for the old, old man. All goot, he have it soon. Meester Adolph he say he call mit some rabbits for me dis very day. You know Meester Adolph. One fine man, one very goot man; a fine feller, Meester Adolph—yet."

Elsie felt her cheeks burn at the thought of his finding her here. It would be a little awkward, certainly. She must hasten her departure. But just then a step was heard outside, and a knock at the door.

"Coome in;" and in response to Gretchen's words the door was opened, and a robust form clad in a hunting-suit, and carrying a pair of rabbits in his right hand, entered the room.

"I had the good fortune, Gretchen, to find these in my new trap;" and then catching sight of the young lady, the speaker starting violently removed his cap abruptly, and stammered out an apology: "O Miss Hastings, forgive me! I did not know you were here."

"I just came over to see Gretchen and leave a note," Elsie said pleasantly, rising and holding out her hand frankly. "I am sure Gretchen will be glad to have such a nice present."

Taking her hand gratefully the huntsman seated himself, and soon the three were carrying on an animated conversation.

Gretchen at once handed the last comer the letter which Elsie had given her, and this action at once removed any restraint, as showing that the trapper's wife was one of the

knowing ones, and the conversation gradually drifted to the cave and its inhabitants.

Gretchen mentioned them all by name, but Elsie could not decide whether she had ever been in the secret home or not, and so was somewhat guarded in her utterances, but she soon noticed that Adolph preserved no such reticence.

"Gretchen is our very faithful friend and knows us all," he said, in answer to Elsie's look of caution at one of his remarks; "don't you, Gretchen?"

"Yah, yah, und Sophia is mein own child—mein own leetle one," giving sundry hints that when that young maiden entered cave life, some fourteen years before, that she had been present and acted the part of "wise woman" on the occasion.

"The letter is addressed to 'my friend in the cave,' and I need hardly ask who it is for, and so must not open it, yet I would fain claim that title too; perhaps you will teach me how?" the huntsman said, gently, regarding her wistfully.

"Oh, how can you talk so. I thought Russians were always frank and candid. You know that I esteem you as a friend who has proved to be a friend indeed."

Again that look of distress which she had noticed before whenever she alluded to her obligation to him.

"I am sure Miss Hastings would not willingly wound anyone, but she does hurt me when she speaks of obligation to me."

"Then I will call you my friend, if you will let me, and not allude to your kind deeds as proving friendship."

"I shall be so grateful if you will try and forget."

"No, I shall never forget, but I will try to avoid putting the memory in words. But about the letter; you may as well read it."

"I would rather you would tell me the contents—I mean the inside," hesitating as if a little doubtful of the other word; "but," he added, nervously, as if fearful she might

misconstrue his meaning, "I can read in English well, although not such a scholar as my father is in this fine, strong language."

So Elsie told him what she had written, and he seemed greatly pleased that she and her father had decided to visit the cave so soon.

"I must be going," said Elsie, rising, after a few more moments of conversation in relation to the proposed visit of the coming week.

"May I accompany you to the cross-roads, that is, if you do not desire to ride fast?"

"Certainly, if you are going that way," returned Elsie, as he assisted her to mount.

"Good-by, Gretchen. I hope Hiram will soon be home, for you must be pretty lonely out here by yourself."

"Ach, dat Hiram, he forgot Gretchen, and tooken mit anoder voman," laughed the jovial creature. "Yah, yah, und den he get one frau long so big," holding her hand as high as she could, "und she step long, und Hiram he feel goot. He say, mein Giraffe, 'Gretchen no walk mit him one bit;' yah, he get anoder frau already."

"No, indeed, Gretchen; no one could suit him as well as you, and tell him I said so," rejoined Elsie, as she rode off, leaving the happy-looking woman standing amid her flowers, the very picture of content.

The vigorous mountaineer strode alongside, easily keeping pace with the active Gyp, who rather chafed at being restrained to a walk instead of being allowed his own gait, which his young mistress, as a rule, freely accorded to him.

"I greatly fear, Miss Hastings, that I must at times, on account of my ignorance of society rules and usages, appear coarse and rude to you, which gives me much vexation. I am glad of an opportunity to mention this so that you may not misjudge me and think I am intentionally careless."

"You have never been either rude or careless since I

have known you, Mr. Adolph, and, I assure you, that it will please me much more if you will act out your natural impulses and trust me frankly. I believe you to be a gentleman who can trust his instincts for the right, so promise me that you will dismiss such thoughts forever. My father and I shall like you much better if you are simply yourself. Ordinary society men I despise, and I am glad you are not one."

She felt rather flushed at making such a long speech to him, but she had observed with concern the peculiar diffidence which this strong, natural man, whose bearing was really winning and courteous because it was the outcome of a sympathetic and generous nature, manifested in her presence, and his words now gave her the clew to this condition. Her reply seemed to inspire him.

"You, indeed, are kind so to encourage me. How I regret my limited social opportunities and my inferior education, but my life has been a very singular one. Society I could not have, on account of my father's forced concealment, without attracting an attention which might have been awkward, and arousing a curiosity which might have imperilled those nearest and dearest to me. So I have had to satisfy myself from the dawn of manhood with such pleasures as hunting and the study of nature afforded me."

She listened closely, and her face told him how keenly she appreciated what he said, and sympathized with the difficulties of his lot. At times words seem impertinent and out of place, and he so thoroughly understood all that she meant, that verbal expression was not asked or expected.

"I have determined to break these bonds which so curtail my liberty and keep me tied to the clod, when I would fain soar to the altitudes which it seems to me must ever beckon the earnest spirit. I am a Russian by race, it is true, but by long residence, by sympathy, and by the other

ten thousand influences which breathe in the air, glisten in the light, and spring up from the very soil I tread, as well as those wafted in to me from republican institutions, I am an American, heart and soul an American."

She spoke now, and eagerly, for his last words thrilled and stimulated her into speech.

"How glad I am to hear you say that. It would seem to me as if anyone escaping the limitations and crushing disabilities of the Old World, must indeed be like a bird escaped from prison. Your dear father, whom I can never thank enough for his unremitting kindness to me, is, too, an American at heart, though still bound by strong ties to his native land."

"He is, as you say, an American at heart, but not in the sense that I am, who have grown up amid her institutions, although debarred from deriving full benefit from them. But do not suppose," and here he spoke eagerly, "that I am in any sense less a Russian patriot. No, I love the land of my fathers, but I despise her government and institutions. But a better day will soon dawn, and Columbia will be able, in a not remote future, to salute a sister Republic, purged and purified from the hideous evils which now infest the body politic, moving forward in the pathway of progress under a Russian flag."

His face shone as if with the light of prophecy, and he looked eastward as if he already saw the star of promise rising above the horizon.

"A glorious hope," rejoined his companion; "and if all her sons had your faith and your ardent love of liberty, Russia might have the dream realized in a month."

"Here are the cross-roads, and I suppose we must part. Thank you for this interview. Do you know," and here his voice became so low as to be just audible, "that every Russian at birth is supposed to have an angel or good spirit appointed to watch over and direct him? I often

think this must have been forgotten when I reached earth, or else the sweet spirit forsook me soon afterward in despair. Will you be my angel, and guide and inspire me to better things, so that I can move upward and forward instead of downward and backward?"

His tone was half jocular, but the pleading, almost appealing, look in the eyes showed how intense was the feeling which had inspired the request.

"Your good angel has never forsaken you; it is treason to her to speak so." But seeing that same look demanding a different answer, she continued: "I sadly need a good angel myself, and could hardly be such to you or anyone, but I will promise as far as possible to try and arouse your angel when she seems to slumber."

"Then henceforth she will wear your form and be inspired with your spirit, and so my sun will always be in the heavens. Adieu!" and, dropping his hand from Gyp's silky mane, he raised his cap and stepped aside, as the steed sprang joyfully forward at a canter.

Elsie's thoughts were in rather a tangled state as she speeded along the highway. She was not quite sure that she had fully understood this interesting foreigner, and uncertain as to the sense in which he understood her answer. Visions of Mrs. St. Johns' reproving face came before and framed themselves in the shrubbery on either side of the avenue as she rode up to the house, and she almost fancied she could hear the "How incautious, how very incautious, my dear," as coming from the fashionable dame.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### "A MAN'S A MAN FOR A' THAT."

Do coming events cast their shadows before, and does a subtle influence from the unseen come to us to warn of their neighborhood?

Elsie started with almost superstitious dread, when, on reining sharply up at the platform, Mrs. St. Johns stood before her. She at first doubted her vision, but the voice dissipated all doubts.

"My darling Elsie, how charming you do look. Roland, help Miss Hastings to dismount."

That young man did not require the hint, for he had sprung forward with eagerness as soon as the horse stopped.

Fond of her friends as she was, and hospitable in all her instincts, yet the young mistress of the mansion could not repress a feeling akin to annoyance at finding the new guests. The thought of the engagement she had just made for the visit to the cave with her father, and the possibility that it might be interfered with by the new arrivals, vexed her for the moment exceedingly; so much so, indeed, that she found it difficult to respond with her usual warmth to the greeting of the city lady and her young people. Her father, who came out a moment later, half suspecting the possibility of this feeling on the part of his daughter, and knowing how her heart was set upon the Wednesday trip, took an early opportunity of whispering to her: "We will manage things somehow, don't be discouraged."

These words helped her to throw off the temporary depression, and her usual cordiality at once returned.

"I did not give you any warning, my dear, although Ruskin urged me to, for I told him that in the country, people are never put out by guests—so different from the city, you know."

"City or country, mamma," said Alfarina, "it is no light matter to have a regiment quartered on you without previous notice."

"Where did you pick up such horrid military terms," said the languid Angelina, looking amazed that anyone should compare the St. Johns family to a regiment, while her mother regarded her younger daughter with well-bred surprise.

Elsie hastened to say: "It was not really necessary, Alf, to send us notice, for we have a large house, and are always ready and glad to receive our friends."

"There, Alfarina, that is a complete refutation of your opinion, and a fitting answer to your, I must say, rather coarse remark," Roland took the opportunity to pay off some old scores by remarking.

The young woman who had thus inadvertently or designedly incurred so much censure, merely gave her brother a look which plainly said, "I'll settle with you, sir, for this some other time," and he well knew that she would.

Roland asked Elsie if she had been gardening, and on receiving a reply in the affirmative, begged her to allow him to see her garden. She cheerfully agreed, and asked if his sisters would not like to go too. Alf at once rose with a pleased "Oh, yes, I should indeed," but a warning look in her mother's eyes induced her to resume her seat.

"I had rather they would not go out in the sun at this time of day, especially after travelling." So Roland and the young hostess went alone. As it was almost sundown, Elsie could not understand the objection to the Misses St.

Johns going out, but the astute mother had plans of her own to forward, and her daughters remained in the house.

"Why, mamma," said Alf, reproachfully, when the others were gone, "how could you say you didn't want us to go out at this time of day, when it is sunset and the most pleasant time of the day?"

"Because, Alf, I wish your brother and Elsie to become better acquainted with each other; and I hope you will see the wisdom of this, and so give them opportunity. I wish Elsie had a little more city polish, but she is an admirable young lady, and will have a most excellent influence over Roland. And this is one of the finest properties in the country," she added, significantly.

"Whew!" said the incorrigible Alf. "A match-making mamma. Now I understand it," and the young lady buried her face in her handkerchief to hide her merriment.

"Alf, if you cannot control this unseemly mirth and restrain yourself from such uncalled-for and rude remarks, you had better retire to your room. In fact, I shall peremptorily insist upon it, if I hear any more language like that."

Mrs. St. Johns, although rather affected and even frivolous, as might be expected from such a devotee of fashion, nevertheless had in her own way a great deal of latent determination, and her family, including her husband, knew that when mamma had decided upon anything, she would accomplish it if possible, and so all had gradually learned to accept her ultimatum and submit to her wishes. Alf was the only one who ever offered any serious show of resistance, for her native honesty repudiated and rebelled against many of the subterfuges and wirepullings which she saw so common in the world of fashion, and which her politic mother had not the slightest scruple in resorting to, to gain certain desired ends. Naturally, the younger daughter, under similar training would have developed a character somewhat like Elsie's, for whose frankness and honesty she

had a profound admiration. Somewhat like, we say, but yet lacking Miss Hastings's earnestness and strength ; for Alf, although quick and alert to perceive inconsistency and deviations from the strict path of candor and rectitude, yet lacked persistence to carry out her best impulses and to persevere against popular wrongs. Whereas Elsie had the spirit of a mediæval martyr, and would have only gained strength from opposition.

Alf St. Johns was sincerely attached to her brother, although she lashed him so often by her sarcasm, and nothing would have pleased her better than to have seen the young exquisite united to her friend of the Hermitage ; but her sense of the incongruousness of such a union was too much for any other feeling to gain the ascendency.

"Why, the very idea of such a noble, straightforward, sincere girl as Elsie marrying such a tailor-made specimen of humanity as Roland, is simply absurd. Madam mamma won't find she is so omnipotent as she thinks," she exclaimed to her sister when they were alone.

"For shame, Alf, to talk of your brother so. I am sure there are very few young men can compare with Roland in society. The only thing that surprises me is that he can fancy such a girl as Elsie—so unfashionable, so mannish in her ways and manners. Very few gentlemen, and Roland is a gentleman, would care for a country girl to preside over their establishment."

"Pretty good, Angy. But he would be a lucky fellow if he could get her, and he knows it too. Why, she would be the making of him. But there's no fear, Elsie will look for very different game."

"Slang again ! I really wish you would not use such expressions. I cannot tell where you picked them up !" said the elder sister, who in the mother's absence thought it her duty to act as mentor to her junior.

"It's not slang—my, how particular you are. I heard

father use that very expression last week," returned Alf, who, while somewhat in awe of her mother, never hesitated to hold her own against her sister or brother.

The young man soon showed that his thoughts were not especially running on flowers, for when fairly out of the house he asked his companion, "Miss Elsie, how do the sprained ankle acquaintances get on. When did you see them last?"

This was uttered in a matter-of-fact, careless way, but Elsie noticed that the eager curiosity in her companion's face did not quite consort with the tone of indifference. She suspected that Roland had heard something, or suspected something, and was trying to entrap her into admissions, and so she answered guardedly.

"Indeed, my ankle has grown so strong again that I almost forget the accident sometimes, but so far as I know, the people you refer to are well."

"So far as you know! Why, I'll venture my riding-whip, and you know it's a very nobby one, against a pair of gloves, that you have been to see these persons a dozen times, at least, since I saw you last. Oh, you sly one!" and the young gentleman held up his left hand and shook it reproachfully at his companion.

That white hand with the handsome ring, how well it looked, thought the owner; but Elsie could not help thinking how different the shapely member looked from the strong, brown, manly hand which had held her bridle-rein an hour or so before.

"A dozen times! what a statement; why, you must think I have nothing whatever to do but ride about the country."

"No, but it is pretty hard to keep a fellow in suspense so long. Come now, Elsie, be frank with an old friend, and tell me all about it. I promise you, on my honor, I won't tell a soul without your permission. It mightn't be

prudent to tell mother or the girls, for women will talk; but it's quite different with me. Just tell me all about it now, won't you?"

Here Roland put on his most fascinating and irresistible expression, which he firmly believed no woman, at least no city girl, could resist. But Elsie wasn't a city girl, and she only laughed in a provoking way.

"So you think women will talk, do you? I wonder what Alf would say to that. Well, there must be an exception to prove your rule, so I'll be that exception and not talk—about that subject. How do you like my flowers?"

At the allusion to Alf, Roland looked rather alarmed, and instead of answering the last query, he pleaded earnestly. "Don't you tell Alf what I said; and I didn't mean you anyway, you are so different from other women, have more sense, and I can always depend on what you say," and here the exquisite looked quite manly as he bent on his companion a look of ardent admiration.

"Now, you know I think the world of you, Elsie."

It was only on rare occasions, when alone, that the young gentleman called her by her first name, although the families had been so intimate for years that he was quite justified in doing so, as she very often called him Roland; but his fastidious notions never allowed him to do this in public, or when, indeed, anyone else was present. "It was not in good form," to use his expression, "too much like those country fellows, you know."

"I am very glad you have such a good opinion of me, Roland," said Elsie, simply. "I hope I shall always deserve it, but if you are tired of the flowers, suppose we return to the house."

"Oh, do stay a little longer; it is more pleasant out here."

"I think we had better go in, as I am hostess, you remember, and must see to the comfort of my guests."

"Certainly, but it is provoking that you cannot stay out a while longer; it is so awfully jolly out here this evening, and I have so many things to talk with you about."

But in they went, and found the ladies had retired to dress for dinner, which was almost ready. Elsie met her father for a minute in the library before the guests came down, and immediately spoke on the subject most interesting to her at the time.

"Oh, father, how provoking, and I have made all the arrangements for Wednesday. What shall we do?"

"It could be postponed, I suppose—I mean the visit to the cave—if absolutely necessary; but some plan may occur to me whereby we can carry out our design without infringing on the laws of hospitality."

At dinner Mrs. St. Johns arranged that her son should sit at Elsie's right hand, and, acting under previous instructions, he plied her with attentions. The hour passed quite pleasantly, for the matron was an excellent conversationalist when she pleased, and the host fully seconded her efforts in this direction.

"I am so glad to know that your cousin Warren is back, and, I understand, is quite smitten with one of those English girls; at least a friend who saw them at Niagara told me that Warren was acting quite lover-like," said Mrs. St. Johns, at the same time watching Elsie's face keenly.

"The family were very kind to Warren in England, and I am glad he is travelling with them. I think it must be a little awkward for strangers travelling in this country at first, everything is so different," replied Elsie, quietly.

Mrs. St. Johns went on to tell of a friend of hers who had, a few months before, married his first-cousin, and inveighed severely against the custom. "Why, the Prayer Book distinctly forbids it; it is terribly wrong, almost as bad as brother and sister."

The good lady was, as Elsie knew, a strict Episcopalian,

and so with her the Prayer Book was paramount authority. But the young hostess responded calmly as before.

"Not quite so bad as that surely, Mrs. St. Johns ; and as for the Prayer Book, I am afraid very few accept its authority as you do. But there are many reasons why it is better, perhaps, that cousins should not marry."

"I was sure that you would agree with me, Elsie ; I regard it almost as a crime. Don't you look at it that way, Mr. Hastings ?"

"No," replied the gentleman, smiling, "I cannot say that I agree with you fully. As a rule, for physiological reasons first-cousins should not marry. Yet, if both parties are strong and healthy, and with a good family history on both sides, and sincerely attached to each other—why, I fail to see any serious objection to such a match."

"But the Bible and Prayer Book both forbid it. It is a sin against God," urged the city lady, warmly.

"I do not think it is forbidden in the Scriptures, and as to the Prayer Book, I hardly think the seventeenth century was capable of teaching what the nineteenth century should, or should not, do. I regard it as lying more in the province of the physiologist than in that of the moralist or theologian. However, in most cases I object to it, but on purely physical grounds."

Mrs. St. Johns was fain to be content with this partial agreement with her views, even if based upon totally different premises. Having been somewhat suspicious that Warren Seaman had something more than a cousinly regard for Elsie, she wished to ascertain how father and daughter stood in reference to this question of alliances between relations. She concluded that she need not fear the cousin as a rival to her fastidious son, and so breathed more easily. Roland, she fondly believed, was worthy of a duchess at least, but then duchesses are not numerous in this democratic country, and then, too, she should seriously object to

the wife taking precedence in rank or title of her darling boy; and so she decided Elsie, being an heiress and withal a bright handsome girl, would be the next best. She mourned, as before intimated, the young lady's lack of fashion, but felt sure that could be mended after marriage under the efficient mother-in-law control that she intended she should have. So the politic lady laid out her plans for the matrimonial campaign which should result in making Roland and Elsie one flesh.

To Elsie's great relief, on Tuesday morning Mrs. St. Johns declared that she must pay a visit to a married schoolmate of hers living in H., some twenty miles from the Hermitage.

"Well, if Roland can drive, and wishes, I can let you have the horses, and you can go by the road to-morrow instead of by the train," said the host, glancing comically at his daughter.

"But you don't drive, do you, Roland?" said Elsie, in a tone which rather piqued the young man.

"Oh, no, Roland is not accustomed to horses," said his mother, anxiously; "and besides, there is no hurry for a few days."

"Indeed, I have had more experience in driving than you give me credit for; and, if Mr. Hastings will kindly trust his horses to me, I will drive you with pleasure," said the young gentleman, loftily.

"Well, I will give orders to have the carriage ready for you at eight to-morrow morning. John, who is very handy, will go along to take care of the team in town, and relieve Roland if he wishes.

"Of course Miss Hastings will accompany us," said Roland, who wished an opportunity to display before her the horsemanship which she had doubted.

"Not this time," said Elsie, rather anxiously; "you know I am not acquainted with Mrs. Rogers, and then the carriage only holds four besides John."

Roland pouted somewhat at this, but the arrangement was made, although Alf and Angie both offered to remain if Elsie wished to go ; but the offer was persistently declined for very good reasons. Indeed, as the time for the cave-visit approached, she had become very nervous for fear that the trip must be abandoned. Yet she thought her father would find some way out of the difficulty, and this proposed expedition to H. just answered the purpose.

Wednesday morning opened bright and lovely. Everything seemed bursting with life, and dead or inert matter appeared to shrink from sight under nature's widespread robes of living glory. Life, life, everywhere the vital principle showed joyfully triumphant over decay and death. This tremendous force behind the phenomena of being, working so ceaselessly, so resistlessly pushing and stimulating myriad material things, dull and motionless, into marvellous forms of activity and beauty—what is it?

"Goodby—a very pleasant journey and visit. We meet at dinner this evening at seven. Roland, better watch that off-horse. He is a little skittish sometimes," were Mr. Hastings' last words as the St. Johns party drove away.

"I wouldn't dare to trust that young man with those horses if John was not along ; but John, young as he is, is one of the best drivers in the country," he said to Elsie.

In about an hour, the father and daughter were on their way to the cave, walking briskly in the cool morning air.

"How fortunate that Mrs. St. Johns should have thought of that visit to H.! I was truly in a quandary to know what to do, and I would not have disappointed our friends in the cave for the world," Elsie said, her face glowing with the exercise, and the feeling of relief she experienced at the way matters had shaped themselves. Her father smiled at her curiously.

"I am afraid our guest would not have thought of this visit, if it had not been urged upon her."

"Urged upon her by whom—you, father?" returned his daughter, in surprise.

"Oh, no. We have to thank French adroitness for this."

"Mrs. Wagram—why, how did she know anything about it?" exclaimed his hearer in amazement.

"From acts or words she drew the conclusion that you wanted to-day free, for some purpose or other, and so she asked me about it. I told her in a general way that we had formed a plan for to-day, but perhaps it would have to be abandoned on account of our guests. How she accomplished it, I do not know; but the next thing was that Mrs. St. John was possessed with the idea of visiting H. You know Mrs. Wagram used to live there at one time."

"Then this service is a sort of peace-offering; for she feels dreadfully about that robbery, and is afraid you hold her accountable, although I have assured her again and again that such is not the case."

"No, my dear; for though I certainly feel that she broke faith in being away from the house that night, yet I am certain that she could not have hindered the burglary had she been there."

Stepping from behind a large oak-tree, cap in hand, the Russian, Adolph, stood in their path, followed at a brief distance by Hiram. It was about the same locality as he had met Elsie in before. His well-knit, muscular figure showed to advantage in the close-fitting hunting dress; and his frank, yet rather retiring manner made a good impression on Mr. Hastings, to whom Elsie introduced him. She had at once given him her hand, which he took diffidently, glancing at her parent as if doubtful whether the gentleman would sanction an appearance of intimacy with his daughter. In truth, the father did wince slightly on seeing the stranger and his child on apparently such good terms; but it was only a passing emotion, which his better

nature controlled at once. Giving his hand cordially to the huntsman, he said pleasantly: "I have long wanted, Mr. Adolph, to meet and thank both your father and yourself for the kindness you showed my daughter when she met with that terrible accident last fall."

The face of the foreigner was a curious study of conflicting expressions while Mr. Hastings was speaking. First, a delighted surprise and appearance of intense relief swept over it, succeeded at once by a flush of painful confusion, accompanied by a deprecating gesture of his hand. It was only an instant, however, before he recovered his habitual strong self-control, and answered:

"To meet you, Mr. Hastings, is a pleasure long looked forward to. To hear you speak such friendly words is more than I deserve."

"Hiram, where have you been all this time?" said Mr. Hastings. "In meeting new friends, we must not forget old ones."

"The Giraffe" came forward from the shadow of the tree where he had been standing, while his companion was being introduced to the proprietor of the Hermitage.

"Friend Alf, I hev been to visit me old mother, that lives in 'Netticut. Durn your butes, Hiram, says I, the ole woman's getting on, says I, past ninety, says I, an' I'm durned if I don't leave Gretchen to care fur the ranch an' scoot for 'Netticut."

"Now, Hiram, why didn't you let me know you were going to see your mother, and I would have sent her a present? I should have liked to, ever so much," said Elsie.

The eyes of the trapper shone brightly as she spoke.

"Bless yer good heart, Miss Elsie! the ole woman'd feel good ef she knowed, and I thank yer allus the same. Hearty thank yer; fur the ole woman's right smart, she is, an' 's young as ever."

The simple fellow spoke this enthusiastically; for his love

to his mother, although they seldom met, was very strong, as Elsie knew.

They were now walking in the direction of the cave, Adolph and Mr. Hastings in advance, and the "Giraffe" and Elsie following at a little distance. Arrived at the clump of bushes, the party stopped, and the Russian produced two silk handkerchiefs from his bosom.

"As no doubt your daughter—that is, Miss Hastings—informed you, sir, we have to blindfold all introduced to the cave who have not been initiated into the 'circle.' We hope you will not take it unkindly, and you may shortly see your way so clearly in connection with our aims that this form will cease to be necessary."

Of course Mr. Hastings could put but one construction on this, and answered cheerfully: "Perhaps I may; and, in the meantime, I am quite willing to walk in temporary darkness, hoping, through your guidance, to reach the light."

The younger man bowed with a gratified smile, and the bandages were soon adjusted.

"This reminds me of my early days, when I was initiated into the great order which then took the lead of all others—at least, among English-speaking people," remarked the gentleman, as they were carefully guided through the winding passages of the underground way. In a short time a halt was made, and the, to Elsie, familiar "Slava Bogu" greeted their ears, as the bandages were quietly removed.

"Welcome, very welcome to our underground home," said a pleasant voice, as a reverend figure, with long white beard, came forward with outstretched hands to meet Mr. Hastings' newly recovered sight. Although tolerably well-informed of his appearance from Elsie's description, the guest was hardly prepared to find such a very dignified, handsome embodiment of regal old age in this singular abode.

"Father, this is my friend and benefactor, of whom I have told you," said Elsie, taking a hand of each.

"Not as a stranger do you come among us, my son; for, knowing your amiable daughter, we feel that we know you," said the old man, taking Mr. Hastings' hand, and placing it over his own heart. "With heart and hand I welcome you."

At the same time, those magnetic eyes were fixed winningly upon the stranger visitor. The reception was impressive in its simple dignity, and left a very pleasing influence on Mr. Hastings, who was then introduced to Nadia and Sophia, who had just entered the room, the latter somewhat less demonstrative toward Elsie, on account of the awe-inspiring presence of Mr. Hastings, but still clinging to her beloved friend fondly. It was truly a unique party assembled in the singular dwelling—the grand old Exile, looking patriarchal enough to warrant his calling Mr. Hastings "my son," as he had done; then the erect, still fresh-looking proprietor of the Hermitage, just entering the path of old age, with but a glimpse of the winter-roses showing in his hair and beard. Close to her father sat the heiress of the Hermitage, radiant with health and youth, showing, by her heightened color and smiling face, how keenly she enjoyed the occasion. Near her, but somewhat in the shadow, stood the sinewy form of the younger Russian, in whose manly, expressive countenance could be easily read how intensely interested he was in everything passing. And the gentle Nadia, the unobtrusive wife of the Siberian exile, with the active, ardent, affectionate little maiden, Sophia. Nor can we omit the oddest, quaintest form of all, standing away from the group, but towering above them, gaunt and solitary, like a tall pine hardly used by the elements, and stripped of all verdure and beauty, but standing out against the landscape—heroic, strong, enduring, storm-defying, and fearless—the "Giraffe."

To describe the expression of the trapper's visage, as he

gazed at the little assembly, would be impossible. He heartily entered into and enjoyed the scene; for excepting, perhaps, Gretchen, all those to whom he felt closest bound were before him; and it was a delight to the simple soul to help bring them together. His long face was drawn into a curious contortion, meant for a smile; and it was a smile, although a grotesque and rather alarming one, which by no means did credit to the kind human feeling which prompted it. It was a smile which cruelly caricatured his loyal heart and strong, earnest faithful nature—a smile in which every feature taking part to produce it looked as if playing in a burlesque. Let physiognomists say what they list, the human face does not always give a true idea of the character, especially if a panther's claws have had something to do in shaping the physiognomy, after Dame Nature had dismissed it as finished. And such had been the case with the "Giraffe;" so the play of the emotions on his face was truly a "comedy of errors," so far as the beholders were concerned.

Contrary to his former custom, Hiram remained in the room, probably in obedience to a sign made to him by Adolph when they entered.

"What a magnificent dog," said Mr. Hastings, laying his hand on the head of the Russian hound, who had approached as if to welcome the guest.

"Alex is one of the few good things Siberia produces," replied the Exile.

"Is he really a full-blooded Siberian blood-hound? I have often heard of them, but not seen one before."

"Yes: a friend brought him to me when a puppy, three years since; and he is, as you see, one of the family. Alex, now you have been introduced, go and lie down."

The obedient animal did at once as his master ordered, followed to his resting-place by the admiring eyes of the visitors.

"We have long known of you, Mr. Hastings, and grieved that opportunity did not offer or circumstances permit a nearer knowledge," remarked the Patriarch, turning to his guest.

"Well, I cannot say as much," answered the gentleman, smiling; "for I did not know of your existence until within the last three days."

"No, you could hardly have suspected that you had underground neighbors—that is, of your own species. But though isolated, apart, and unknown, yet we have not been entirely unaware of the life passing around us, or unsympathetic with the experiences which go to form the current of human existence. Your dear child here—and the aged speaker fondly regarded Elsie—has doubtless informed you of those circumstances in my earlier career which compelled this solitude and separation from society?"

"I think Elsie has told me all, so far as she knew, understanding such to be your wish."

"Perhaps I acted unwisely in the course pursued, and might have been justified and protected, had I stated the facts and thrown myself on the generosity of this tyrant-hating, freedom-loving country, just then herself emerging from a terrible but victorious conflict with oppression and wrong. But remember, I was a stranger, and did not know how far the power and vindictiveness of that hateful despotism, which held the throat of my native land in its relentless grasp, could go. Siberia, with all the soul-haunting dread and horror which that word implies to a Russian, was ever before me; and anything, even death itself, seemed preferable to that."

The old man paused, and seemed lost in painful recollections, and bent his eyes on the ground, while Adolph remarked, in a low but clear voice: "Mr. Hastings, you must excuse us if we seem to obtrude our private griefs upon you; but our wrongs have been so long confined to our own

bosoms that it is indeed an unspeakable relief to express them to sympathetic ears: besides, freedom and human rights are sacred themes, in which all noble souls must feel interest."

The gentleman addressed looked toward the speaker with kindling eyes: "I should be dull and selfish, indeed, did not the recital of human sufferings and wrongs touch me," said he; "nay, more, I am profoundly affected and interested by the attitude assumed by the different nations of the world toward the great principles of individual freedom and human rights which we are trying to emphasize in this republic of ours. Russia especially, in her frantic efforts to solve the problem of true relations between the governing and the governed, has attracted my most earnest attention and heartiest sympathy."

Father and son both testified their deep gratification in the words of the speaker by an eager attention, while the play of emotion on the expressive face of the venerable Exile was to Elsie peculiarly touching.

"Your words, my son, are like food to the hungry—for they give strength. Relying on this love of right, which is inherent in your nature, we have invited you to come among us here, and take a place in our hearts, even as your dear child has. We ask you to know us, and judge of our claims and hopes, our aspirations and efforts. In short, we hope to be able to call you a friend and fellow-well-wisher toward the redeemed Russia of our faith and trust. For are we not all brethren—whether American or English, Hungarian, Polish, French or Russian? Are not the interests of all members of the great family of nations identical—the greatest good to the greatest number; to emancipate, elevate, and enlighten the many, and to curtail and limit the powers and privileges of the usurping few? Yours is the exemplar nation of modern times, and marching in the van of progress and carrying the people's flag. America, lead

on ! and let each nation which deserves the name, even poor Russia—down-trodden, oppressed Russia—wheel into line and follow ! "

The venerable speaker rose during the latter part of his vehement utterance, standing erect with one hand resting on his staff, which Sophia had brought to him preparatory to their seeing something of the cave, which had been proposed so soon as the guests had rested a little.

"But we will leave this subject now, and go and look at a few of the many curious chambers in this underground abiding-place."

So saying, the speaker led the way, the others following, with the exception of Nadia and her daughter, who disappeared behind the curtain which separated their apartments from the general sitting-room. After inspecting those parts of the subterranean region which have been spoken of before, the party returned to the sitting-room for lunch, and such further conversation as the time permitted before returning home.

The visitors did full justice to the nice little lunch, which was served in full view of the great ravine, now clad in the full glory of late spring. Although the heat outside was rather oppressive, within the cave the temperature was quite pleasant, though there was a little fire on the great hearth—which fire, Mr. Hastings was informed, never was permitted to go out entirely.

" For there are very few evenings, even during July and August, when fire is not pleasant here," remarked the host to his guests.

In looking at the arrangements and curiosities of the singular room in which they were seated, Mr. Hastings soon noticed the symbolical drawing of the circle and dagger :

" Why, how very curious—the dagger and circle, Elsie," he whispered significantly. " Can that have any relation to our house and grounds ? "

"Ask the Patriarch," she answered smilingly, quite willing that he should draw his knowledge from the fountain-head, and indeed desiring that the subject of the circle should be opened up, being conscious of some little prejudice in her father's mind against these foreign secret societies.

"I am glad you asked this question, my son; for I would like you to know the manner of our society. As I told your daughter, the property you own does really bear the symbolic stamp of a member of our circle, who was formerly proprietor of it. The picture there shows the same, on a small scale, that your grounds and house do on a large. Our organization numbers over one hundred thousand members, men and women, of all nationalities and of all shades of religious belief, but one in their detestation of tyranny, and hatred of oppression in any form whatsoever. Any true friend of Russia in her struggle for liberty can be a member."

"But allow me to ask if that dagger does not suggest the taking of life, if necessary to compass certain ends deemed important? In other words, as, in so many of these secret political societies, is not assassination regarded as justifiable to put obnoxious people out of the way?" asked Mr. Hastings.

The Exile looked pained at the question, and responded slowly: "By no means. Assassination is by us not only considered as unjustifiable, but is abhorrent to the whole spirit of our order. The dagger with us simply means self-defence. We are sworn to defend ourselves and our friends against peril; but that is all."

"Then you are not Socialists, and do not sympathize with their methods?" said Mr. Hastings, in a surprised way.

"No, we are not, in the extreme sense," deliberately answered the aged Exile, smiling on his questioner, "although I am well aware that we have been and are so considered. But our methods of action are entirely pacific; and one of

the most important of these agencies is by the dissemination of the right kind of literature—teaching people to think. We seek to conquer or persuade or convince the brain, feeling assured that this accomplished, and not until then, the hands and hearts will be at our service."

Altogether the visit was, to Mr. Hastings, a means of removing much involuntary prejudice which he had entertained against the various secret societies which have risen to such importance in European politics.

Treachery, midnight murder, gunpowder, and poisoning, had been synonymous with such organizations, and he was really relieved to find one order at least, which professed to be based upon a higher and more rational platform. He was greatly impressed by the dignity, urbanity, and noble bearing of the Russian exile, and the quiet, domestic pleasant manners of the mother and child. Adolph, he acknowledged, was a straightforward, manly fellow, and had he been—but why mar the pleasant memory of what was a very enjoyable occasion by any foolish wishes?

"I must see more of those people, they are peculiarly interesting;" he said, to his daughter, on arriving at their own gate, just as the clock was striking the dinner hour.

Fortunately, the St. Johns' party had not returned, but came in a few minutes later, and so were unaware of the host and hostess having been absent from home; and it was decided best not to specially inform them.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### "I HOPE I DON'T INTRUDE?"

"Yes, Miss Elsie, I knew Mrs. Rogers when I lived in H. She used to visit Madame La Raimée, the French milliner, who was mon ami, my great friend, Miss Elsie. And I told Madame St. Johns about the beautiful artiste Madame La Raimée was, and about some beautiful hats madame had got lately from Paris, and so she say she must go;" and here the black eyes of the vivacious Frenchwoman twinkled gayly, and Elsie knew how truly she had penetrated and sagaciously played upon the weakness of the city lady.

This conversation was suggested and caused by the vision of Mrs. St. Johns and her daughters, each arrayed in a new hat, as they passed up-stairs to their rooms. Roland was rather out of sorts; for although, owing to John's skill very largely, the driving was a success, they having only blocked wheels three times with other vehicles and knocked down one infirm old man, yet the young man was indignant at having been made unknowingly an accessory to a millinery expedition. Besides which, he could not forgive his sisters for not having insisted on Elsie's accompanying them.

However, he brightened up somewhat at dinner when Mr. Hastings complimented him on the good condition in which he had brought back the team. A dollar to John, and fifty cents to the knocked-down man, who was more frightened than hurt, this accompanied by a stern injunction to the girls to preserve a discreet reticence, enabled

the young gentleman to feel quite at his ease, and even boast a little of his skill in handling the ribbons. Alf longed to take him down a peg or so, as she termed it, but her mother's eye meant mischief she knew, in case such attempt was made; and so she wisely refrained for the time being.

"We have had a most delightful day, I can assure you, Mr. Hastings; the day was charming, *tres charmant.* Oh, you should have been with us, Elsie. Such exquisite spring hats, just your style, right from Paris—just too lovely. If I had known what a magnificent trip we were going to have, I would have insisted on your going; positively I would not have taken no for an answer. How did you spend the day?"

The remarks to Elsie, with the exception of the last sentence, were uttered in a low tone, and intended for her ear alone.

"We, too, have had a nice time. Father and I took a country ramble, and called on some of our country acquaintances," said the young lady, quietly.

"Bless me, who is that?" said Mrs. St. Johns, as a two-wheeled trap, drawn by a handsome white horse, drove up to the door.

A servant entered, bearing a card, on which Mr. Hastings read aloud,

"Harry Esmond, Melbourne, Australia."

"Cousin Harry, from Australia," ejaculated Elsie, while her cheek paled a little, as she glanced at her father's rather clouded brow.

"And here I am, my dear uncle and cousin, closely following my card; forgive me, I did not know you had company, and was so anxious to see you that I could not wait;" and the new-comer shook hands heartily with Mr. Hastings, and kissed Elsie, almost before they knew it, and certainly before they had recovered from their surprise.

There was no help for it. If that cloud on Mr. Hastings' brow had indicated any unpleasant feeling at his nephew's appearance, or Elsie's sudden pallor showed some old wound reopened, the guests were not permitted to know of it, for the master of the Hermitage immediately regained his self-possession and gave his relation a formal introduction to the rest of the company.

"Perhaps you would like to retire to your room, or will you join us at dinner now," said Mr. Hastings.

"Well, uncle, I am, to be sure, not very fit, in this travelling costume, for the company of ladies, but if they will pardon it I will join you now. You do look so cosey and pleasant."

The new visitor was of the medium height, of slight build, and swarthy complexion. He had shaggy eyebrows, dark curly hair, and a full black beard. Attired in a neatly fitting travelling suit, and with a display of ornament bordering on the profuse; he suggested a well-to-do merchant or commercial traveller, of about thirty years of age. He was soon entirely at his ease with the company, and proved a very entertaining companion, having apparently travelled extensively.

"Have you just returned from Australia, Henry; I see your card has Melbourne on it?"

"Yes, uncle, I have permanently located there now. You see, I have been rather lucky, made some good speculations in the mining region, and have realized considerable money. So I thought I must come and see you all. You don't know how I longed to see the old place again? I spent my boyhood here, Mrs. St. Johns."

"Why, are you the nephew that was the companion of this dear girl's childhood, and went abroad so many years ago?" asked the lady, regarding him curiously.

"Yes, I am indeed the same," returned the young man, meeting her gaze unflinchingly. "I was rather a wild fel-

low then, I confess, and gave my friends some anxious hours, no doubt, but I've sown my wild oats—have reformed in fact, and with my brightened, and still I hope brightening, prospects have decided to settle down into—ahem—into respectability. I frankly acknowledge my past has not been perhaps just as straight-laced as some might wish. Boyish follies, my dear madam, boyish follies, but as one of our poets says: 'The sun that sheds the brightest day, may rise from mist and gloom.'" And the speaker gracefully made a little gesture with his shapely jewelled left hand, as if to emphasize his quotation.

Esmond was well aware that Mrs. St. Johns knew his early history, and so he shrewdly resolved to forestall criticism by a frank contrition, and a show of manly regret, knowing well that the reputation of having been "a little wild" would rather act as a recommendation to the ladies, a sort of passport to their favor. Such attitude of women toward the dissolute of the other sex works untold evil. It is a fruitful source of misery, suffering, and woe. The hateful maxim which passes too current in female society that "married," or as it is termed "reformed rakes make the best husbands," is an iniquitous falsehood. No man whose youth or early manhood has been trailed through the mire of vice, ever makes the man he might have been, without such loathsome baptism. These stains reach to the soul, and it will take more than the few years of Time to wash them out. If the unwritten history of the after-marriage life of the "reformed rakes" could be read by the other sex, they would stand back appalled, and shrink as from the brink of a precipice, at the physical, moral, and spiritual corruption revealed. Some of the most awful perils to which human nature can be exposed are thoughtlessly incurred by delicate refined women, in marrying men who have been "only a little wild."

Harry Esmond had been left an orphan at the tender age

of three, through the death, by accident, of Mrs. Hastings' only brother, his wife having died shortly after the child's birth. The little one was at once adopted by its uncle, who felt all a father's interest in it. Three years older than Elsie, the children had grown up together and been as brother and sister, all through the years of childhood and youth. But Harry proved erratic and intractable. He early showed a predilection for low society, and when a mere lad would annoy his uncle by bringing about the house the bad boys of the neighborhood. Admonition and punishment proved of little avail, and the boy was sent to a boarding-school at the age of thirteen ; but at the expiration of the first term, the principal, Dr. Goring, sent a note to Mr. Hastings, declining positively to receive young Esmond again, as he was simply incorrigible, and recommending a private tutor for him. The suggestion was acted on, but the tutor, scholarly and conscientious, had to console himself with the rapid progress of Elsie, who joined her cousin in some of his studies, for the indolence and apathy of his special charge.

At the end of a year the tutor resigned, tired of his task, and strongly urged that the boy should be apprenticed to some mechanical work, as he showed more aptitude for handling tools, than anything else. But while the uncle was trying to perfect arrangements with this end in view, the nephew had turned his mechanical abilities to account in another direction. It was conceded by all who had come in contact with the boy, that he had abundant ability, if he would only direct it into some useful channel. He was a perfect mimic, and excelled in dramatic power. He easily eclipsed all his youthful competitors in the school and home tableaux, or exhibitions in which he had taken part. He had an excellent voice for song and some musical ability. He had learned to dance and do it well too, in some inexplicable way, having never taken any lessons, and naturally

his accomplishments made him very popular among youths of his own age. He had repeatedly urged his uncle to let him become an actor, but knowing that with the boy's habits and inclinations this would mean absolute ruin, Mr. Hastings peremptorily declined.

When Harry was about sixteen the Milford Chief of Police called on Mr. Hastings, and was closeted with him for an hour. At the expiration of the interview, Harry was sent for by his uncle, and given the choice of going to prison to be tried for implication in a series of petty robberies in Milford which had long defied the vigilance of the police, or proceeding by the next steamer to Australia.

The chief was inflexible. Young Esmond had been the planner and leader of the gang of boys who had done the pillaging, and he must stand trial or leave the country. The proprietor of the Hermitage had done the chief a favor at one time, having been his bondsman, and to save Mr. Hastings' family pride he stretched his authority to give his nephew a chance to escape.

"I have done everything possible for you, Harry. I have been a father to you, but you have proved an ingrate, and henceforth we must be as strangers. I will give you a letter to a merchant in Sydney, who will, for my sake, give you employment, and so you will be afforded an opportunity to retrieve yourself and be a man. Give up your bad habits—your smoking, and drinking, and fondness for bad society—and you may yet grow up to be an honorable man, and this crime and your worthless boyhood may be forgotten."

The reckless youth listened to his uncle's admonition with barely concealed contempt, and felt rather glad than otherwise at the prospect of being his own master. He experienced no compunction for the wrong he had done, but only regretted that the break came before the gang had matured their plans for breaking into a large jewellery establishment, where they expected to obtain considerable booty

—sufficient to enable them to go to some distant city, as they were half afraid that suspicion was being attracted to them.

There were about nine in the gang, the chief said, and he had all the names, and their operations had shown considerable adroitness and skill—so much so, indeed, that the police suspected that some older criminal had been directing matters, without showing his hand, so well had their tracks been covered up.

Elsie was much distressed at her cousin's sudden departure ; for, in spite of his waywardness, she was much attached to him, and he had been the playmate of her childhood. The dissoluteness of the youth could not efface from her mind the memory of the handsome, curly-headed boy, who shared her early life, with its sunshine and shadow, its smiles and tears.

Perhaps the only redeeming feature in Harry's character was his affection for his cousin, which had always influenced him in a degree—that is, when it did not too seriously interfere with his own selfish pleasures. He bade his uncle a cold good-by ; but when he turned to his cousin, the tears came, and he turned away to conceal an emotion he felt ashamed of.

"Be a good, noble boy, Harry, and perhaps Mr. Gordon will take you into partnership. Promise to write to me," she whispered, as she slipped into his hand a small gold watch, with his name and that of the donor, and the date of gift engraved on the back, which had cost her all her savings to purchase.

So the lad had left the Hermitage, the home of his boyhood, and the scene, too, of his criminal youth.

At first he wrote to Elsie pretty regularly, telling how he had delivered his letter, and was employed in Mr. Gordon's store ; and then the letters became infrequent, and finally ceased altogether.

At length, at Elsie's urgent request, about four years after her cousin's departure, Mr. Hastings wrote to the Sydney merchant, and was amazed to receive a reply disavowing all knowledge of the young man. The letter of introduction had never been delivered, and nothing seen or heard of the bearer of it. To be sure, Mr. Gordon stated that about the time referred to, a gang of young gamblers fresh from the States had landed in the city, and began operations pretty extensively, but he hoped the missing nephew had not been acquainted with them.

"My dear, we must dismiss Harry from our minds; I am afraid his case is hopeless. Let us talk no more about him; he is not worthy of it."

And so Harry Esmond had dropped out of their lives, until he now loomed up eleven years afterward, and took his place at the dinner-table, as stated. No wonder the uncle's brow clouded, no marvel the cheek of the cousin paled and flushed as the prodigal entered the room.

The stranger nephew talked vivaciously, and yet with a deferential politeness, that quite entrenched him in the good opinion of the young people, at least, not excepting Elsie, who was touched by his candid acknowledgment of wrong-doing in the past, and claims of being quite reformed.

Mr. Hastings was polite to his relative, but it evidently cost an effort; and the young man felt that, in spite of his assurance and dash, it would be necessary to "have it out" with his uncle very soon after dinner, but was confident in his ability to place matters upon an amicable footing.

About an hour after dinner, a card was handed to Mr. Harry Esmond, requesting his presence in the library. The Australian entered the room in his cool, confident manner, and offered to take his uncle's hand, saying: "You cannot tell how glad I am to see you again, uncle, after our long separation. It's deuced hard to pass so many years of

one's life in a strange land, away from all one's friends, I can tell you."

Mr. Hastings ignored the extended hand, and quietly motioned him to a seat. "Now we are alone, Henry, it is not necessary to keep up an appearance of friendship which cannot possibly have any real existence between us. On my part, it might be excusable before strangers, from the wish to avoid unpleasant family recitals; but on your part, it can only be the grossest hypocrisy, to cover some scheme or ulterior aim. Will you please explain your appearance here—I may say, your extraordinary and unwarranted intrusion here, considering the circumstances under which you left us, as a criminal, eleven years ago, and the brazen effrontery of those lying letters you wrote from Australia, not to mention the suspicious silence you have preserved ever since?"

The culprit listened with a chagrined hurt look upon his rather handsome face, which gradually gave way to an amused expression, as his uncle referred to the letters. Taking a cigar-case from his pocket, he held it toward his offended relative, saying: "It is dull work talking, uncle. Have a cigar; they are real Havanas, I assure you"—at the same time taking one himself, and biting the end preparatory to lighting it.

"Please restrain your smoking until you go outside; I allow no one to smoke in this room. Besides, I want no trifling, but a clear understanding of our position forthwith."

"Well, now, I remember you didn't smoke—excuse me; but I thought maybe you had learned in the meantime. Now, uncle, you shouldn't be hard on a fellow. I did treat you meanly. When I think of it, I could go out and hang myself; but you can forget and forgive, can't you?" Remember I was only a boy, and now I am a man, which makes all the difference in the world. Don't it?"

"I might have forgiven you if, when you went abroad, you had acted honestly; but to go and write those infamous, mendacious epistles to your cousin—you don't suppose I can ever forget or pardon that?"

"Now, uncle, what would you have a fellow do? I went and looked at that old fellow, Gordon, and was in his store, and made up my mind that he was a poor sort of a cuss—I beg pardon. I mean not the right kind of man to govern a lone orphan like myself; and then one of his clerks I got acquainted with said he was a regular tarer, and wouldn't let the boys have a holiday when they wanted it. So I concluded that he and I would be better friends if we stayed apart. I knew it wouldn't be so hard parting if we never got acquainted."

"Very kind of you, I am sure; and I am certain Mr. Gordon would feel indebted to you, if he knew what a narrow escape he had had. But, to judge from some of your expressions, I should say your boasted reformation hasn't struck very deep," remarked his uncle at this stage of the young man's fluent exculpation of himself. Indeed, Mr. Hastings had not interrupted him, because he wished from his talk to find out how he really stood, having little doubt but that he would condemn himself out of his own mouth.

"Well, uncle, I suppose you are willing to be friends, and let by-gones be by-gones; so if you have nothing more to say to me, I will order out Nero and give Elsie a drive, I so want to have a talk about old times with her." Saying which, the young man put his unlighted cigar in his mouth, and started toward the door.

"Not so fast, my good sir. I must know more of your past life, and have some good proofs that you are really reformed, before I admit you, even temporarily, as a member of my family. How do I know that you are a fit associate for your cousin, or these young ladies?"

"Well, I declare, uncle, you are a regular Bluebeard, to

treat your own sister's child that way. Don't you wish to help me, when I am trying to do better?" This was said in a half-pathetic way, at the same time the ferrit-like eyes under the shaggy brows were watching the effect of his words.

"No nonsense!" thundered Mr. Hastings, thoroughly roused from his usual calm self-control. "Don't dare to mention my sister's name, which you have disgraced," and, lowering his voice, "even more deeply, I fear, than any of us know or suspect. Sit down, I tell you, once for all, and answer my questions, or else leave the house at once."

The nephew dropped into a chair unwillingly, and sat eyeing his relative in a half-sullen, half-conciliatory way. It was easy to see that he was exercising great control over his naturally passionate and vengeful disposition—having an end to gain, which he considered worth the effort.

Mr. Hastings drew his chair to the table, and motioned his nephew to do the same; then taking out writing materials, he said, quietly: "I am not disposed to throw even a pebble in the way of the meanest of God's creatures which is trying to rise in the scale of being—much less would I do it to one in whose veins runs the same race-blood as in my own. But I know you, Henry Esmond; your life has been one of duplicity and wrong-doing. Whence you derive the degenerate blood, God only knows, for your mother was as true a soul as ever lived in flesh; but if you have reformed, as you claim, you must prove it by something better than mere words. I propose to trace up your life since leaving here, categorically, step by step. So answer my questions, and beware how and what you answer; for I shall take steps to verify your statements."

At the expiration of half an hour, Mr. Harry Esmond left the library with a bitter imprecation on his lips, and a somewhat less confident expression on his face, as he proceeded to find his cousin. She was on the veranda water-

ing some favorite plants, alone; for the St. Johns party had retired early, being somewhat fatigued, excepting Roland, who had been improving the time by giving Elsie a graphic history of the day's adventures—even admitting that he had locked wheels with a farmer's wagon, but claiming that he did it on purpose, just to see the old fellow's annoyance. "It was as good as the opera, you know, to see the expression of the rustic countenance, when he found he was fast, and his scraggy horses couldn't budge. I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

"How could you, Roland? Why, it was a dangerous thing to do."

"Oh, no, for we had a very strong carriage; but don't tell your father, or he won't let me have the team again, and I want to drive you to-morrow or next day."

Roland had just disappeared for more water, when her cousin came seeking her; and Elsie saw at once by his face that something was wrong.

"Do you want to see me, Harry?" she said, speaking the name with an effort; for she could not as yet feel quite at home with this bearded stranger, who resembled the smooth-faced lad who had left her so many years ago in nothing but the restless eyes and the vivacity of manner which was as marked in the man as it had been in the youth.

"Yes, Elsie, my dear cousin; the old gentleman is unreasonable, and I want you to intercede for me."

She stopped him in the full stream of his lucid, easy speech by raising her hand. "Harry, you must not speak of my father that way. I will not listen to it!"

"Why?" he exclaimed, really astonished. "Oh, I know: you object to his being called the 'old gentleman';" and here his laugh rather grated on her sensitive ear. "Well, then, to please you coz, you, remember, not him by a—well, all right. My uncle, then, says that I must leave to-night. He says that you have too many cares on your mind at pres-

ent to attend to any more guests. But you don't mind one more, Elsie. It makes me feel bad, after coming so far, not to be allowed to stay and rest awhile in the old home." Here he looked at her with the pleading glance which in boyhood times always conquered her and served to bring him out of many a trouble with her father.

"I think, Harry, that father must have some other reason, for he is justice and hospitality itself. Were your answers to his questions satisfactory?"

"Well, now, that's a good one; as if they could be satisfactory with such an old—I mean, he put me in the witness box and fairly turned me inside out. I told you I'd reformed. I'm looking up, but a fellow can't do everything all at once. I can't be as good as him in a day, 'tain't reasonable, and I don't mean to, either. I mean if you'll only let me stay here for a while I know I can satisfy you both that I have really reformed, and actions speak louder than words. Please, Cousin Elsie, you can do anything with my uncle;" and here he took her hand and would have kissed her, but she turned away her head, with an instinctive shrinking from the caress, and also conscious that Roland was watching them from the other end of the long veranda.

"Well, Harry, you must stay to-night; at any rate it is too late to leave now; I will speak to father. Stay here until I return."

His influence over her was still strong, and she felt it in spite of the lapse of years. And the cunning Australian had known from the first that his prospects at the Hermitage depended almost entirely on his cousin's good-will, as based upon their former intimate association.

"My child, I am afraid of taking the risk and responsibility of giving this, by his own confession, heretofore dissolute young man, the entrance to my house and the intimacy of my guests and daughter, even if he is your own cousin,"

"But, father," urged Elsie, "it will look very strange and even create scandal if he should leave so abruptly, after having dined with us, and so plainly stating that he came to stay for awhile; besides, if he has really reformed, think how we should reproach ourselves, if we should discourage his efforts to raise himself above his past?" This argument went home strongly to the father and uncle, for the proprietor of the Hermitage was singularly sensitive concerning anything which might impugn his reputation for kindness and hospitality.

"Elsie, my dear, the young man has shown no proofs whatever of his reformation; rather, the slips in his conversation, and indeed, his whole bearing, seem to preclude any such thought. We have only his own word for it, and you know from the past how much credence can be given to his statements. I have taken down in full his answers to my questionings, tracing him from point to point in his wanderings in Australia, where he says he has been engaged in mining most of the time. I intend writing to some trusty friends out there who will take steps to verify these statements of his, and I propose to let the answers to these inquiries govern our future relations toward this professed repentant prodigal. Certainly it would be only the part of common prudence to keep him at arm's length until these answers arrive. Harry is not in want of money; indeed, he professes to have abundance, so he had better live at the hotel and hold himself aloof until we receive corroboration of his avowals."

"But, father, it will be perhaps two months before you can hear, and think of the risk of bad society cousin will run stopping at the hotel, where he will probably come in contact with some of the evil influences that ruined his boyhood. He would be infinitely safer here. Do try him father, and let him stay?"

"My dear Elsie," said he, laying his hand on her head,

"it is sadly against my judgment, but I cannot refuse you, especially as my own heart speaks a word on behalf of the poor deluded young man who is his own worst enemy. Let him remain to-night and I will tell you to-morrow what I have decided on for him."

So the nephew triumphed, and went to rest feeling satisfied that, to use his expression, "he had taken the first trick."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### PLAYING WITH FIRE.

ST. PAUL, MINN., June 3, 18—.

MY DEAR COZ: Hurrah for U. S., the best country yet! I feel this A.M. as if I trod on air or might take wing, and, spurning this dull sluggish clod, soar beyond the arching blue, white fleeced, into the rarer ether which savants tell us fills interplanetary space. But no, I nobly refrain, and will stay where I am, for you might need me, and how sad would be thy lot were I not here. No thanks, you are more than welcome to my best services at this distance. Distance, 'tis naught, souls like ours rise superior to mere distance—for us, space exists not. Such common obstacles have meaning merely for the ignoble crowd who cling to surfaces, and breathe only on superficies. We, that is you and I, live in thoughts, and contact by soul communion. No, I am not a candidate for the post of physician to a lunatic asylum. No, madam. But perhaps you have been intent on mundane matters and concerned with vulgar cares, and so cannot soar this morning, so I must fain descend to your level and discourse in matter-of-fact. We are having a glorious time, and nature has been kind, almost to satiety, so far as weather is concerned. Our English friends "rejoice and are exceeding glad"—quotation you observe, though for the life o' me I cannot place it at this moment. Someone at my elbow to whom I referred, says "Psalms," but I say "Shakespeare," because he said everything. We visited Niagara and gazed upon its turbulent waters with befitting awe. The Britons looked and wondered, and wondered and looked, and tried to find suitable similes, but nothing came until someone said, "'tis time for lunch," and so to lunch we went! What a marvel it is! I mean, of course, Niagara, not lunch—no, the bill was the marvel there. But we have been everywhere, and seen nearly everything, and "still our wonder grows"—think that's a quotation, but not quite sure; give me credit for it, if it is.

This is a charming region, and Mr. T—— says he would be almost

willing to live in Minneapolis for the remainder of his career. Just think of that—such an acknowledgment for an Englishman, and a Londoner to boot! We may decide to go on to California, certainly we shall visit Salt Lake and the Mormons, and so in my next I may tell you something about that many-wived city. Now a word for yourself, Coz. Do you often go to visit those stranger folks that you sojourned with when you ran away—no—strayed away from home last winter? Didn't I promise for you that you would tell me all about it when I came back from England. No doubt you forgot it in the exuberance of your joy at seeing me again after so long an absence. However, I want you to write and make amends for it by sending me a full account in your next, and if I find I cannot keep the secret, why I will get Ellen here to help me keep it for you. By the way, you ought to tell me, because I have decided to locate in Melville, and so I want to know everybody, and those secret folks may not yet have engaged any doctor. By the way, how would you like Ellen for a cousin. I begin to think—hold your ear close so no one else can hear, that she is my P. C.

Your most loving cousin,

WARREN SEAMAN.

"Father, read this; Warren is engaged to Ellen Thompson, at least I think so by his letter. Here it is."

"What does he mean, my dear, by P. C.?"

"Oh, physiological complement; and I have heard him say that whenever he met with his P. C., he would engage himself forthwith."

"I suppose he meant if the P. C. would have him?" said Mr. Hastings.

"No such proviso on the part of the modest young man, for he insisted that if she was really and truly his P. C., she could not help herself; she must have him, the attraction would be so strong. It is one of his funny theories."

Harry, the other cousin, was still at the Hermitage, and to all appearance likely to remain. He had contrived to ingratiate himself into the good graces of everyone in the house except Mrs. Wagram, who fairly detested him, but yet could give no reason for it. She said he reminded her

of some one she hated, and that was all she would say about it. Elsie would frequently observe her studying and watching him at a distance, much as a cat will contemplate a coveted bird, into which it longs to put its talons. And somehow the feeling seemed to be fully reciprocated by the young Australian; for after one or two attempts to insinuate himself into the good graces of the Gallic lady, Harry Esmond studiously avoided her, and seemed anxious to escape her observation.

"He is no good, he is one bête noire," remarked the dame, one day, to the housemaid in Elsie's hearing.

Esmond was a capital rider, and his white horse Nero could be seen very frequently bearing his master hither and thither—sometimes at a break-neck speed, as some of the staid country folks thought. Occasionally, his cousin would accompany him, but not so often as he wished; for she knew that her father did not desire it—at least, did not wish much intimacy with the young man until he heard from Australia. Harry seldom spoke to his uncle, indeed they instinctively avoided each other; although, had the latter followed his natural promptings, he would have given heart and hand in helping the young man to lead a good, useful life. Once, indeed, he had half hinted that Harry would do better to take a situation or set to work in earnest at some useful calling; but the nephew showed such a disinclination to converse on the topic that it was not resumed, and Mr. Hastings felt all his suspicions return in full force, and looked forward anxiously to the expected communications.

Mrs. St. Johns and her daughters were charmed with Mr. Esmond—"such a well-behaved, distingué-looking young man, and so free with his money. Quite an acquisition to our society, my dear. And supposing your cousin was a little fast? Why, Elsie, all young men are fast, sooner or later, and they make none the worse husbands. You know Mr. Whitely, the banker, that you met at our house. He was

one of the wildest young men, and everybody prophesied evil of him, and said he would never come to any good; yet he married a lovely girl, Clara Howard, the belle of our set, and is an exemplary husband and father."

And the good lady smiled with an air of calm wisdom at Elsie and her daughters, as if she had uttered profound truths.

Poor, thoughtless butterfly of fashion, living on the mere surface of things, she little suspected the inner history of the Whitely marriage. She little knew the amount of money which found its way periodically into the pockets of a certain respectable, intensely respectable, black-robed individual as hush-money—blackmail, if you will—in order to render the wealthy banker safe from revelations connected with his early life, which if known might seriously mar his domestic and social bliss. Retribution? Aye, it stalks a ghost, but 'tis dreadfully certain; and when its hand, bodiless and immaterial as it seems, touches the culprit, it brings a chill like that of the charnel-house. A marriage! Great heavens! what a hideous mockery of a word which should mean so much, involving such responsibility. On the one side, a blasé mind, withered heart, selfish instincts, a diseased body and a haunting memory, a wretched worn out affair—a prematurely used up vehicle, revarnished to sell. On the other, a girl's trusting heart, given to one that she believes pure and virtuous, mentally and physically, as herself; in short, an Admirable Crichton—the one man of all the world. Such had been the Whitely-Howard marriage—a great social event of a few years before, and to which Mrs. St. Johns referred in such eulogistic terms. To be sure, Clara did look pale and care-worn, and was a good deal of an invalid, and her two children were sickly; but of course the skeleton was kept carefully in the closet, and as usual all except the few were hoodwinked.

Mrs. St. Johns was a managing woman, and fond of plan-

ning other people's lives for them ; and, having decided on Elsie as a daughter, she was fast making up her mind—by no means a very formidable operation, considering the size of the material—that she would like the gay, witty, wealthy cousin for a son. As to which of the girls was to be offered up to the Moloch of expediency, she had not yet decided. At present, she rather hoped the gentleman would fancy Alf ; as Angie, being more distinguished-looking, and withal more amenable to the maternal influence, might, by skilful manœuvring, secure a title, or at least a husband high in diplomatic rank.

Harry Esmond and Roland had become fast friends and constant companions. The former, with his varied experience, knew exactly how to influence such a man as Roland, who, being exceedingly vain and proud of his supposed knowledge of the world, of which he really knew nothing, was an easy prey for any designing, unscrupulous companion who could gain his confidence. The young men were out a great deal together, and spent many evenings in Melville, not returning until late at night. Mr. Hastings watched this growing intimacy with much uneasiness, knowing how weak and easily influenced young St. Johns was, and almost compelled to believe his nephew utterly unprincipled, in spite of fair appearances. He did not feel justified in speaking to Mrs. St. Johns on the subject, dreading her reproaches, if she believed his suspicions correct, and her want of discretion in any case ; and he knew how entirely useless any remonstrance would be, addressed to Roland. So there was nothing for it but to wait with the best grace possible for the arrival of the expected letters from Australia, which would authorize decisive action at once, or else be a warrant for believing in the reformation of the prodigal.

One thing Mrs. St. Johns was cognizant of, which the others were not, and which did excite some little maternal

alarm occasionally; and that was Roland's impecunious condition since he had formed the new acquaintance. He was nearly always "strapped," to use his expression—which word horrified her fastidious ears much more than the fact alarmed her judgment. She was frequently appealed to for loans and advances, and occasionally the amounts were considerable. She demurred and remonstrated; but only sons are not easily refused, and so the result was usually the same—concession on her part, and victory on his. Having a liberal private income, independent of her husband, the fond mother could gratify the son without letting any one else into the secret.

"Some investments, which will yield handsomely by-and-by, but money needed constantly for improvements now. Rich returns, in which you will share, after a while, mother," was his usual answer in substance, though occasionally varied in style. Besides, it was hinted to the lady bountiful that these investments had some mysterious relation to the success of his suit with Elsie, which served to render the fond parent more pliant and yielding than she might have been otherwise.

Early in their acquaintance, Roland had been induced to confide to his companion his ardent admiration for Elsie, and determination to win her; and Harry had vowed to further his suit in every way possible.

"She shall be yours, my boy," he exclaimed, clasping his hand warmly; "and Harry Esmond never goes back on his word, when he gives it to a friend! Damn it if he does!"

The young man never used profane language in the house, or in the presence of ladies; but somehow, outside with Roland, he was not so scrupulous, and the latter rather inclined to regard it as a sign of confidence and fellowship.

"Why, I know Elsie better than anyone else in the world; I was brought up with her, and have more influence with

her than anybody else. Yes, you shall be my cousin; depend upon it, if you'll only be guided by me."

Elsie was really attached to her cousin, in spite of the cruel duplicity he had been guilty of toward her father and herself. She had a woman's faith in the reality of his reformation—perhaps because she ardently wished it. She had watched him pretty closely since he had returned, and her faith grew stronger. Once she had noticed, on a starlit morning, when restlessness induced her to leave her couch and sit by the window, the figures of two young men coming softly toward the house. At first alarmed, she recognized them when they came nearer, and a cold chill of apprehension passed over her, she could not tell why, and a strong suspicion of her cousin took possession of her for a few moments; but she resolutely repressed the feeling, although deciding to speak to Harry in the morning, and let him know that she had seen them. This she did, when the gentleman laughed and called Roland, who was near, declaring that they had been out walking, and had fallen asleep in the warm night, on sitting down to rest, having been utterly unconscious of the lapse of time, until Roland waked up, to discover it was three o'clock in the morning; and then, of course, they made their way home.

It might have been observed, by an uninterested looker-on, that Roland looked quite astonished at Harry's statement, and blushed somewhat when asked to corroborate it; but if Elsie did see this, she attributed it to the young man's natural annoyance at having been so caught.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A PASSAGE AT ARMS.

It was five o'clock in the morning, and Elsie was up and dressed. The day was opening clear and bright, although with a promise of sultry heat, not uncommon to late June.

"What a superb morning for a gallop," she said to herself—"just the thing. So if you are agreed, Gyp, off we go to the table-rock and back, before breakfast."

A moment later, she was in the stable speaking to Gyp, who neighed joyfully, and seemed by his restless motions to be as anxious as she for one of their old-time gallops. For since the visitors had been at the Hermitage the black steed had often missed his daily exercise with his young mistress, or had to submit to being taken out by James merely for a mile or so. James was on hand, and soon the rider was on the saddle, and away they went at a rattling pace in the direction of the table-rock. Never had the air felt more bracing and stimulating; for a shower in the early night had laid the dust, and, as it were, washed the atmosphere. Every bush seemed alive with some form of life, and nature wore her wondrous dress of deepest green.

As they neared a cross-road, not far from the great ravine, Gyp's small ears were suddenly thrown forward, as if some new sound had reached them; and a moment later, his rider became aware of the measured beat of hoofs coming steadily from the east. It became a question

which should reach the crossing first; for the travellers were as yet hidden from each other by intervening trees and clumps of bushes.

At length the sound came rapidly nearer, and a horseman dashed across the road, about fifty feet in advance of her. He seemed in urgent haste, but gave a side glance as he passed, and a second later had reined up so suddenly as to bring his steed rearing in the air like an equestrian statue, and seriously imperilling the rider's seat.

"Miss Hastings! Is it possible? A moment earlier or later, and I should have missed seeing you!" exclaimed the Russian, as Elsie at once perceived it to be; and then, as his cap was raised, she could not help seeing the painful blush that overspread the features which had given radiant emphasis to the joy his words, and the tone more than the words had expressed at seeing her. She felt, as once before, that he feared his frankness had offended her, and hastened to reassure him.

"A delightful morning to meet one's friends, Mr. Adolph; and I am particularly glad, for I wanted ever so much to inquire about your father, and Sophia and her mother. How are they all? Well?"

"Oh, yes, quite well; but do you go to the table-rock? May I ride with you, and tell you of our friends?"

"Certainly, if it will not detain you. I am only taking a gallop before breakfast."

"I shall be so glad. It will not detain me. I can make it up," and then lowering his tone: "Miss Hastings, I have news to tell you; you will be glad, and it will give my aged father delight. 'Slava Bogu'—he had never used a Russian phrase or word to her before, but she could see that he was excited—Ivan Petrovich has escaped from Siberia, and is on his way here. The blood-hounds will be after him; but he will be safe with us. We have saved many a poor victim, and the great Czar has been often foiled."

He spoke triumphantly, and his eyes gleamed with a fierce light.

"But I do not know him, do I? Oh, yes: he is, he must be, Nadia's husband. Is it really so? Has Sophia's father come back?"

She checked her horse to a full stop in her eagerness, her face almost rivalling his own in its earnest glow.

"Yes, yes, 'Slava Bogu,' Sophia's father is even now perhaps in New York."

"How delightful! How I should like to see dear little Sophia's face, when she sees her father! She has never seen him, I believe."

"Not since she was three years old, and she is thirteen now. Ten years exile in Siberia! It makes one's blood boil. He was guilty of nothing but denouncing wrong and bribery and corruption. Such language as your patriots use every day sent him, this husband, this father, this friend, to Siberia. Siberia! Oh, you cannot tell what that word means, Miss Hastings. It means death, or worse than death."

"But then he has escaped, you say. That is a grand thing, and no one can touch him in this land of freedom."

"True, that is a glorious fact; but I must see your father, and know if he can be interfered with by the Russian government."

"I am sure we shall be glad to give any help—that is, I mean my father will aid you in any way in his power."

"I know you will, and I thank you," laying his hand on his heart. "You must both come and see Ivan, and hear his story. It will be a wonderful story."

The table-rock was reached; and, after drinking in the varied beauty of the landscape from the deeply-wooded chasm beneath in its vast depths and extent, to the arching blue above, transparent, clear without a single cloud, and around and around as far as the bounding horizon gave

permission to the roaming vision, they turned to retrace their steps, and dashed off at a free galloping pace.

"I was just from the office with the letter to me bearing the good tidings. How glad they will all be!"

"Now, you must leave me here, and take the news as fast as possible. Here are the cross-roads," said Elsie, checking Gyp at the point where they had met before.

He looked as though he would like to travel further with her, but he checked the feeling.

"I am selfish—you are right. Miss Hastings always is. They have a right to know as soon as possible. But you will come and see us soon, you and your father? We hoped you both might see your way to join our circle; and then you would be free to come and go as you please, without the indignity of blindfolding. I hate myself when I bind your eyes. But you will forgive us; it is the law of the Grand Circle that no one shall be admitted to the lodge-room seeing, unless a member of the order. Our cave comes under the rule."

"Well," said his hearer laughing, "it is very certain I did not see much the first time that I was admitted."

"No, indeed, Miss Hastings; it was almost like being born into our order, and we feel as if you were one of us."

"I know father will want to hear about Siberia. When will Ivan be home?"

"To-morrow, or even to-day. I go to meet him at once on the road. When will you come?"

He spoke so wistfully that she answered promptly:

"Soon, very soon; I will be at Gretchen's cottage next Monday, at three o'clock in the afternoon. I have something to tell her, and perhaps I can leave word there for you. But I detain you, and you must lose no more time in reaching home with the news. Goodby, with kind regards to those at home."

"Thanks, oh thanks! I will see that some one is at Gret-

chen's to receive your message for my father," raising his cap as Gyp leaped forward, glad to be free from the fretting curb.

Neither Elsie nor her companion knew that they had been closely watched, by a pair of sharp black eyes, from behind a clump of bushes near the cross-roads. Somebody else had been tempted by the beauty of the morning to take an early ride; and a few moments after the black horse reached the stable, a rider on a white one dashed up, and dismounting hastily handed the bridle to James, and sauntered moodily toward the house.

"So that's the little game, my lady, is it? Well, it'll go hard if I can't checkmate you. Wonder who the foreign-looking chap is, anyhow? Damn him! what business has he to speak to her? And they seem so intimate, too."

The owner of the white steed walked up and down his room in a perturbed state of mind; for evidently what he had seen and heard threatened to seriously interfere with his plans.

"Monday at three o'clock, at Gretchen's! Who the deuce is Gretchen? Well, I'll be on the alert, and find out what it all means, anyhow."

At the half past-seven breakfast, no one was more bright and engaging than cousin Harry, who seemed in the very best of spirits, and was so pleasant and polite that even his uncle began to relent toward him, and to question whether he might not have done him injustice.

"He had a good father, and one of nature's noblewomen for a mother; and where his depravity comes from, I cannot divine. If I was hasty in judging him, which is possible, he shall find me equally prompt in making reparation. Time only can show. I must wait," said the proprietor of the Hermitage to himself; "but why no word from Australia?"

However, at least one of the expected answers came in the morning's mail; for Elsie saw the Australian postmark

on it, and rather trembled as she took it to the library. On the way she met her cousin, who playfully snatched the letters from her.

"New York—Washington, D. C., and Melbourne, Australia. Whew! now uncle'll be satisfied. The Australian letter at last! There, run along with them, little one! Who knows what may be in that awful letter about your poor cousin?"

So saying, he put the captured missives into her outstretched hand, with a smile which showed, Elsie thought, no fear of the possible contents.

"Sit down, my child, while I read this letter from Melbourne. It may concern you—indeed, both of us—and I wish you to know its contents."

So saying, her father opened and read as follows:

BILLEROO, NEW SOUTH WALES.
May 29, 18—.

MY DEAR SIR: Mr. Richard Gordon, of Sydney, wrote me sometime since, stating that you were very anxious to obtain positive information as to the conduct and life led by a Mr. Harry Esmond, during his residence in Australia. As he had no personal knowledge of the young man himself, and knew only incidentally that he had left Sydney, after a very brief residence, to reside here, Mr. Gordon asked me to give you the information, as a mutual friend of himself and Mr. Esmond. The young gentleman referred to lived here for at least five years, and was engaged as a stock-broker and speculator, for which he showed remarkable aptitude. My acquaintance with him covered at least three years, and we had many business transactions together; so I speak from personal knowledge, when I say that, while fond of society, and perhaps what a very straight-laced individual might term convivial occasionally, he was a gentleman in his deportment, and honorable in business relations, always winning or losing with equal composure; and you know his business is one of ups and downs. After he left Billeroo, I heard that he made a great deal of money in the mines; and I am sure I hope so, for he deserves good fortune. Any further information will be cheerfully furnished.

Yours respectfully,
RICHARD DARLINGTON.

ALFRED HASTINGS, ESQ.

Mr. Hastings' face brightened as he read, and on finishing he handed the epistle to his daughter, who perused its contents with glistening eyes.

"How very satisfactory! Oh, how glad I am! I feel ashamed of my doubts of Harry. Perhaps he has always been more sinned against than sinning."

"I too am glad of this, Elsie; but I should have felt more satisfied if Gordon had written. However, it is good so far as it goes. But I must request that you say nothing about this until I hear further. I have written several letters, and must await other answers before taking any definite steps."

"But, father, cousin Harry knows the letter has come;" and she related the incident in the hall, and how quickly Harry recognized the postmark.

"That is a little unfortunate," said her father; "however, leave matters to me, and as no doubt he will question you, just refer him to me, and say that I am awaiting the arrival of other letters."

"But Harry has, I know, been offered that position in the H. Bank, if you will go on his bond; and it will be such a disappointment to him, poor fellow."

"And do you really think he expected me to go on his bond, when it must be at least $5,000? It is the position of assistant cashier, is it not?"

"I think so; but it would be such a nice place for Harry, and perhaps would be the turning-point in his life. It will be such a pity if he should lose it."

"Elsie, Harry must not ask me to do such a thing. I can hardly see why the H. people should offer a strange young man such a responsible position, unless it is meant as a compliment to me, having dealt so long with them. However, I must see the president, and ascertain what representations your cousin has made, in order to induce such an offer."

So saying, her parent bid her good-by, left the house,

and was driven rapidly away in the chaise which James had brought to the door a few moments before.

"And he won't do it; and yet you say the letter was very favorable, as I knew it would be. The darned suspicious old"—but seeing her startled, indignant look—"curmudgeon, the postman, I truly believe, has purposely lost the other letters, or I would be all right with your father by this time."

Elsie was not naturally suspicious; but it required all her charity to believe that the latter part of the sentence was the natural conclusion of the first.

"You ought not to speak so about the postman, Harry; for he has always been very faithful, and done his duty well. The letters will be here after a while, no doubt."

"Of course they will, cousin Elsie, and everything will be lovely, so far as I am concerned," he answered, in his usual cheery manner. "And now tell me about my other cousin, Warren, whom I have never met. What sort of a fellow is he?"

Elsie enthusiastically described the absent one, telling what an exemplary student he had been, and ended by narrating his adventures in England, especially his encounter with the burglars, and the subsequent attempt to beat him.

"Why, he must be a hell of a fellow," ejaculated her hearer, who had listened in evident astonishment to her recital. She regarded him with amazement, her face flushing more with vexation than anger.

Seeing this, the culprit hastened to apologize.

"Forgive me, Elsie. This horrid habit of using slang terms has clung to me from my mining life, where I was surrounded by rough men; but I have nearly broken myself of it, and shall not offend you again."

"If father once heard you speak so, Harry"—regarding him pityingly—"all would be over between you. You know such language does not speak much for reformation."

"I know it don't, but I am reformed, for all that; and I know, my sweet, forgiving Elsie, the sister and guardian angel of my boyhood, will bear with her wayward cousin."

She felt that he was at least in earnest this time; for his voice was touched with emotion, and his better nature, to which Elsie always had held the key, for the moment was in the ascendant. Why is it that the good angel with so many people takes such frequent holidays, and leaves his black companion in possession? Perhaps because the former has been ignored and snubbed and insulted so often that he becomes weary, and is compelled to leave, in order to recruit his exhausted energies.

Elsie had always been the incarnate representative of Harry Esmond's good angel, and he sometimes bitterly regretted that he had not heeded her warnings, entreaties, and tears; but although he loved his cousin better than anyone else in the world, yet he loved himself more. And self-love and self-indulgence had been the ruin of his life. Perhaps mankind will eventually find out that the arch-fiend, which they have been dreading so long, and about whom so many sermons have been preached, is, after all, nothing but selfishness. For is not this the great tempter to all sorts of evil? Is not this truly a devil?

Mr. Hastings' interview with the bank president, Mr. Edwards, was not quite reassuring. The gentleman acknowledged that he had acted a little precipitately in offering a position which led directly to the most responsible office in the bank to one who was almost a stranger.

"But, my dear Mr. Hastings, he is so respectably connected, and has such a good address, and then the bank had no doubt, from what he said, that you would go his bond to any amount, besides his being financially easy himself, that we did not feel as if it was an ordinary case—in fact, could not see that we ran any risk whatsoever."

"Well, Mr. Edwards, I quite appreciate the compliment

you pay me by offering my nephew—a stranger to you, or at most an acquaintance of a few weeks' standing—so responsible and important a post; but you will oblige me if you will take no further steps in the matter until you see me, or hear from me directly—that is, supposing the situation will be open to my nephew for a few weeks."

"Certainly, Mr. Hastings. It will not be necessary to fill the office for some weeks, as we have the old assistant with us yet, and he will remain until we are suited."

That evening, a polite note from Mr. Edwards informed Esmond that the position was not to be filled for some weeks, and that his application should have the first consideration.

The young man's brows grew dark as he read, and he viciously crushed the note in his hand, and then tearing it into pieces stamped on them with somewhat savage anger—at least, so the lady at the upper window thought; and, five minutes later, he was on his horse's back, riding at a rapid rate to town. Mrs. Wagram, the lady at the window, quietly descended, picked up the pieces of paper out of the soil, and returning to her room proceeded to arrange them together, and then read the note.

"Mon Dieu, so the bon jeune homme try to get into a bank, does he? Bien, très-bien, oui monsieur;" saying which, she deposited the pieces in a little book, and locked the volume up.

About an hour later, two young men were closeted in an upper room in the principal hotel in Melville. It was the room which Harry Esmond had engaged the day after arriving at the Hermitage, and where he spent much of his leisure time outside of the Hastings mansion. It was a large, convenient chamber, having a recess in the end, containing a bed, which was separated from the rest of the apartment by a heavy curtain.

Mr. Hastings had consented unwillingly to allow his

nephew to make his home at the family mansion, and so he was regarded as a member of the family ; and the fact of his having a room elsewhere was not suspected by either uncle or cousin. Only one in the house knew of it and that was his present companion, Roland St. Johns. The latter youth was walking the floor with hasty strides, looking the picture of chagrin and indignation.

"But are you quite certain that it was Elsie? It is so unlike her, that I can hardly believe it?"

"So like her you mean. You don't know her as well as I do. And as to there being any doubt, why, my dear fellow, don't you suppose I know the girl I was brought up with? Besides, I tell you the horse was Gyp, and no other lady was ever on his back. No, no, it's just as I tell you."

Roland stopped in his walk, and turning squarely round, he looked his comrade full in the face, his eyes glowing like coals.

"I know it's ungentlemanly, as mother says, to swear ;" at which remark his hearer's lip perceptibly curled ; "but I say, 'damn him.' The upstart! I'll have it out with him yet. Can't we find out his name? It must be one of those queer people she got acquainted with during the time she was laid up with her sprained ankle, when we were on before."

"Shouldn't be surprised. In fact I think you're right, and there's apt to be something crooked about them or they wouldn't want to keep hid. All right, old fellow," slapping Roland heartily on the shoulder, "we'll spring a trap on the fellow yet, and perhaps be able to clap the darbies on him. He's a foreign-looking fellow, a Pole or Italian, or something of that kind. They're pretty easily scared, and if I were you, and felt toward my cousin as you do, and she a girl of a million, I tell you, why I'd just have a talk with the scoundrel, and ask him what he means."

"I should like nothing better, but how shall I find out

who he is? Trust me if I get my eyes on him I'll read him a lesson;" and here Roland looked very pugnacious, and his somewhat delicate physiognomy fairly flamed with righteous indignation.

His companion smiled curiously to himself, to hide which, he turned to a drawer near him and seemed to be busy searching for something. Presently he produced a pack of cards, and throwing them on the table said, "Let's have a little game, to pass away the time. I expect Dick and maybe Tom here to-night."

"Well, I'm not very flush to-day, and Dick cleaned me out pretty well last week, and the old lady didn't come down as freely as usual; and indeed, I don't know but I should have been left strapped, only, I luckily thought of the necessity of a new ventilating fan in the shaft of our gold mine, and her sympathy with the poor miners, suffering for want of good air, reached her pocket; but I shall have to go easy for a while, or she may suspect."

Here the two comrades laughed very heartily in concert, at something, and Esmond again clapped the other on the back.

"Upon my word, old man, you're improving, blessed if you ain't. Pretty apt pupil I should say. So the fan brought the rocks, eh? Good—well the mine will need new machinery soon, and don't you forget it."

That night Elsie received a note from her cousin, stating that he had engaged a room at the hotel, as he wished to devote some of his evenings to the study of German and French, thinking they might be useful to him when he got into the bank.

"But I shall be at the Hermitage every day as usual, and sometimes stop there if you will allow me, but I feel that I must redeem some of the time wasted in youth by devoting at least a part of my evenings to study. Bear with me, Elsie, and help me, Elsie, as I know you will. I hope soon

my uncle will give up his unjust suspicions. What a nice well-mannered, gentlemanly young man Mr. Roland St. Johns is ; I learn something from him every day, and I have been able, I think, to teach him a thing or two, having seen more of the world than he has.

"Ever your loving cousin

"HARRY."

Elsie could not refrain from telling Alf, who entered the room just then, what Harry said of her brother, at which that rather critical young lady opened her eyes very widely indeed.

"Roland teach Mr. Esmond some things—how preposterous—unless meant in sarcasm. The teaching on the other side is easy enough to understand, but our Roland teaching anybody ! I hope mother isn't within earshot, or she would make it warm for me, but you know what I mean Elsie ; and the only hope of making anything of Roland is to get him a sensible, noble wife, who would develop the better side of him. I wish you could be the one, Elsie, I would so like you for a sister."

"Thank you, dear, but Roland some of these days will meet with just the right one who will make you as good a sister, as she will Roland a wife."

"It won't be the same to me by any means. But I wish, Elsie, you would use your influence, for I know he thinks the world of you, to try and keep him from going out so much in the evenings. I know I plague him a good deal, and you know he deserves it, but then he is our only brother," and the speaker's voice trembled a little, "and I know he is weak and easily influenced by his associates, and sometimes I fear something dreadful will happen to him. Ma and Angie think he cannot go wrong, and believe all he says. I wish father was here."

Elsie managed to clear the way for her visit to Gretchen's

cottage on Monday afternoon, and, thinking it would attract less attention, decided to walk. Leaving the house quietly, she had gained the side road leading to the cottage when, to her dismay, she heard her name mentioned in the not-to-be-mistaken tones of Roland St. Johns.

"How delightful. I was out taking a stroll, you know, and just becoming bored with the trees and the birds and all that sort of thing—there's so much of it—when I saw you in the distance. At first, I was not sure ; but it gradually was forced upon me that it was yourself, and I was jolly glad, I tell you."

The young man spoke earnestly, and without a shade of embarrassment, which, considering that he had deliberately followed Elsie from the moment she left the house, showed he was improving in the deceptive art.

Elsie tried hard not to feel annoyed, but yet it was impossible to express pleasure at the accidental meeting. "It is a delightful afternoon for a walk ; and so I have taken the opportunity for a little business errand, and shall meet you, I suppose, about tea-time."

Roland had some gentlemanly instincts, which had not yet become quite blunted, and his first impulse was to take the hint, and leave her to the solitude which she evidently desired ; but he was too much aroused by what Esmond had told him to be very nice in relation to minor points of politeness.

"Oh, you will not be so cruel, I am sure," he urged, in his most insinuating tones, "as to condemn a fellow to a solitary ramble, when I should so enjoy accompanying you."

Elsie looked surprised and annoyed, and did not immediately answer, and so the young man resumed :

"Of course, I would not intrude upon you for the world ; but if you are only, as I suspect, going to pay one of your charity visits to one of those dear old ladies with the rheumatics, or old men with the lame back, why, you know, I can

easily stay outside—anywhere you like—until you are ready to return home."

Elsie had stopped as her companion pleaded, utterly perplexed. Besides, she felt a vague sense of uneasiness, a sort of foreboding of evil, which she could not account for. Perhaps it was something peculiar in Roland's manner. To be sure, he was even more polite than usual; but his cheek was flushed, and his eyes had a light in them which she had not seen there before; also, he spoke with a vivacity which was quite foreign to his usual languid style. An unpleasant suspicion crossed her mind, which was immediately confirmed, when by chance his breath reached her face, as he bent toward her in his half-playful, half-earnest remonstrance. She remembered what Alf had said, and the sisterly anxiety she had manifested as to her brother's habits of late, coupled, as it was, with the earnest request that Elsie would advise him. For a moment she felt heart-sick at the thought of the possible downward road upon which this young man might have entered; and this to have taken place while under their roof, and as their guest! However, her strong common sense decided her line of action the instant he ceased speaking; for his unusual loquacity gave her time to think.

"Mr. Roland, this is a private expedition, and I must go alone. Some other time, I shall be very glad of your company. Besides," she added hesitatingly, "I think you had better go into the shade and rest; for you have become heated by walking fast under this hot sun, and if you should become sick it would dreadfully distress your mother."

"Oh, I never felt better in my life. I'm not tied to the old lady's apron-string, you know. I don't mind the heat."

"But I do not think you should speak of your mother as the 'old lady.' It doesn't sound very respectful, does it? It would hurt her feelings if she heard you, her only son, talk that way."

Elsie spoke pleasantly, but in a way that showed her companion that she did not like his remarks. "However, either you must turn back or I must. Which shall it be, Roland?"

The young man looked sullen and baffled for a moment, and then answered, more in his usual manner: "I go, cruel fair one; but why will you be so severe toward one who is devoted to you? Farewell."

Elsie laughed, saying: "Good-by, until tea-time," and hurried forward to make up for lost time. She reached the cottage in a few moments, and found Gretchen and a gentleman sitting outside, under the big sycamore-tree which shaded one side of the dwelling from the afternoon sun. She paused a second before going forward, for their faces were turned from her; but a quick ear had detected her step and presence, and Alex, the Russian hound, sprang joyfully forward, almost alarming her by his boisterous antics. His master at once rose to his feet.

"Alex does not forget you. See, Miss Hastings, you are a great favorite with him."

"The one dear young lady! Mein Gott, everybody und everyding feel goot mit Miss Elsie!" exclaimed the genial Gretchen, as she moved forward with all the speed that her rotundity permitted.

The trio, with Alex, were soon seated under the grateful shade of the noble tree, asking and answering questions.

"Miss Hastings, it would have pleased your kind heart to have witnessed the coming into the cave of Ivan Sobieski." And the speaker's face glowed with the memories he was recalling. "It was sublime! After ten years, and such a ten years, to see his wife and his child! The little Sophia, that was only a baby, and now—now, almost a young woman!"

"I would have given anything to have seen the poor fel-

low and Nadia and little Sophia together at that first meeting," said Elsie, in sympathizing tones.

"Ach, mein Gott! why wasn't I there? Ivan will know me. Ivan will know Gretchen, Sophia's foster-mudder."

"Why, did you know Ivan, Sophia's father?" asked Elsie, in surprise.

"No, Gretchen never met him, although he was over here as a special envoy from the Grand Circle when Sophia was barely three years of age, but only remained a few weeks, and on his return to St. Petersburg was immediately arrested and sent to the mines."

Adolph answered for Gretchen, who had meant, Elsie began to understand, that Ivan must necessarily know of her through her intimacy with his wife and child.

Elsie learned from the visitor that Ivan and the Patriarch were very anxious to consult Mr. Hastings with reference to the former becoming a citizen of the Republic, and as to what degree of peril he would incur by appearing openly. It seemed he had decided never again to visit his native land, but to make his home in the United States.

Elsie knew that her father had been educated for a legal career, but on concluding his professional studies had decided not to practise; and so she knew that he could advise this poor escaped exile what he had best do under the peculiar circumstances.

After some general conversation, and a little business matter concerning Hiram, who was out on one of his trapping expeditions, had been attended to for her father, Elsie, accompanied by Adolph, left Gretchen's cottage for home. Her companion, she was satisfied, had something special to tell her, from his manner; but he seemed to shrink from coming to the point. At last she happened to give him the necessary lead and help by saying:

"Mr. Adolph, I have thought since our last meeting, that perhaps you and your father might like to have some

of our papers or magazines; if so, we should be ever so pleased to lend them to you?"

His color rose, but whether with anger or pleasure she could not decide; yet hardly the former, for it would be unlike him to resent such an offer.

"I was about to ask you a favor like that, but you open the door for me. Thank you so much, Miss Hastings. We would be glad. We both read English," he said, with just a show of pride; "my father very well, for me not so well, but I want to be more educated than I am. I would like some books of science." He slowly emphasized the word. "I am fond of nature, I would like to know about the rocks and plants. I do know something about them; but other men must have found out a great deal about these things, and I would like to know what they have found out. Ever since you told me of the discovery which the German scholar had made about the older rocks, I have wanted to take up that study."

"Why, I never mentioned that to you, did I?" she asked, in a perplexed manner. "I remember quoting that in a conversation with a stranger last winter; but surely"—and she regarded him fixedly—"surely you cannot be the gentleman who caught my horse for me last winter, and helped me out of the snow-bank. How ridiculous! I verily believe you are, and I have never recognized you before. It was you, was it not?"

The Russian looked at her puzzled face with an amused smile. "I am afraid it was; but I unwittingly have brought that incident to your memory. I did not think of it when I spoke."

"I am so glad you have cleared up the mystery, for I was sure I had seen you somewhere before the night of the fire, and this explains it. But you looked so different?"

"Yes, I wore a full Russian winter costume, full beard,

and all, but not any mask. Perhaps you think the beard was mask enough?" and he laughed quietly.

"Mr. Adolph, I know you don't like to be thanked, or I would thank you again for the help you afforded me that day. But about the books. I will bring you books on geology and botany."

"And American history, please. I want to take up a course of study and educate myself. My life, as you know, has been peculiar."

"I am glad you like history, it is a favorite study of mine; and I will bring you a volume I am satisfied you will like, giving both the facts and the philosophy in connection with the development of the land of the free."

"Many, many thanks. But when shall we see you and your father at our home?"

"My father will go to see you, I think, shortly; but we cannot very well both leave at the same time, having guests at present. I will send the books to Gretchen, with a note saying when father will go to the Cave."

They walked in silence for a few moments, as Elsie observed that her companion seemed to be inwardly wrestling with some train of thought, so absorbed and absent-minded did he appear. Presently he looked at her with an apologetic smile.

"Pardon me, but my thoughts were troubled about something, and I have committed a rudeness in seeming to be inattentive."

"Not at all; but perhaps I can help to solve your problem. Suppose you try me? That is," she quickly added, "if it is nothing particularly secret."

"Then I will tell you, if I may. I was thinking how unkindly Fortune treats some of her children. She brings some up in strange and obscure abodes, like moles or rabbits, with very little education and no social advantages, and yet gives them a nature which aspires and longs for the

highest and the best there is, yearning to burst the bonds which trammel and hinder them, and to stand among God's freemen. And to others, whose natures are no better, often much inferior, she gives birth, education, training, social position, everything. Why is it so?"

He clenched his hand and made a rapid gesture as if the injustice of it burned into his very soul.

She answered gently and soothingly, for her keen sense of the mocking inconsistencies of life fully justified his feeling of irritation smarting under the sense of wrong. "'Men give titles, but nature gives true rank; circumstances give position, but God endows the soul; accident gives opportunity, but ability makes it.' My father gave me this to write for a copy when I was a child, and I have never forgotten it. Those who have developed and grown in obscurity have, also, escaped, the soul-staining vices which infest and poison society. Many of our young men who go through college, so my father says, acquire vicious habits which far more than counterbalance the educational advantages they have had. Yet I fear I cannot make my thoughts plain; but I feel very strongly that the education, training, social position, wealth—all of which the world values so highly, are not for a moment to be weighed against natural intelligence, integrity, courage, and what we call the moral qualities."

His kindling glances and intense expression of interest, showed how he appreciated her words.

"I cannot dissemble to you. I have spoken of my own fate, and would fain take comfort from your noble words, if I dared think they could apply to my case in any degree; but I fear not. I am ambitious. I would soar high. I would be worthy of the best social life. But alas! I am chained to a rock, and can neither break the chain nor lift the stone."

"Mr. Adolph, I have read somewhere of a poor prisoner,

who was bound by cruel fetters, and held by a clanking chain to the wall of his cell. Without was the sunshine, the birds, the flowers, friendship, home, and freedom. A friend carried him a small file hidden in a glove. That tiny instrument ate through the binding, cramping fetters, and through the solid links of the hideous chains, and the captive was free. Can you not find a file and use it? Surely it is worth while; freedom lies beyond."

His form seemed to expand and take on greater altitude, as he asked, with dilating eyes:

"Was it a lady's glove that held the file? Oh, please tell me, for if so, I may indeed hope."

She held out her hand, saying:

"It was.—Good-by." For they had reached the turn of the road in sight of her home.

He raised the hand to his lips, fervently saying, "God bless you, I have found the file," lifted his cap and walked rapidly away.

When Elsie parted from Roland St. Johns his truer instincts of right and politeness urged him homeward, and indeed he proceeded for a few moments rapidly in that direction. But the unfortunate glass of liquor which he had taken, "just to steady his nerves," and the heat of the day soon made the quick movements unpleasant, and so he sought the grateful shade which a clump of bushes and a large beech-tree made, and was soon asleep. He was awakened by the sound of voices in his vicinity, and, as his mind began to clear, he easily detected the tones of Miss Hastings' voice speaking earnestly to some one. At one time he would have pronounced it ungentlemanly to play eavesdropper, but now Roland was too intensely interested in Elsie's movements to have any scruple, and so moved into such a position that he could partly hear what was said, and at the same time obtain a fair view of the speakers. The conversation was rather obscure to him, but his sus-

picions were confirmed and his jealousy burned with increased intensity.

"Harry was right when he put me up to following her." And here the young man indulged in some strong expressions with reference to Elsie's companion, which indicated how thoroughly his worst passions were aroused. He decided to follow them, and if opportunity offered, "talk to that fellow."

In his excited condition he could not see how utterly absurd such a proceeding would be, but that "glass" still influenced his brain sufficiently to destroy all prudence. When he witnessed their parting, he was more furious than ever, for it so exactly confirmed what Esmond had narrated and which Roland had really doubted.

The Russian had traversed about a quarter of a mile after leaving Elsie, when he was astonished to see a gentleman, whose breathing gave indications of rapid walking, or even running, step into the path before him and signal him to stop by raising his hand.

"I wish to speak to you for a few moments, my good fellow," said the stranger, whose voice showed him to be decidedly out of breath.

Adolph paused immediately, and bowed courteously, inquiring the nature of the business.

"May I ask you your name, if you please, and when you first became acquainted with Miss Hastings?"

This was demanded in Roland's most aristocratic style, the manner in which he usually addressed servants or those he considered inferiors.

Adolph, who at first had seemed a little disconcerted, flushed angrily as the speaker concluded his insolent questions, and taking a quick step toward him, demanded:

"And who are you, sir, I would like to know, that presumes, in this manner, to question me?"

The calm, imperative tone of the Russian, and the air of

disdain with which he uttered his words, lashed Roland beyond all prudential considerations.

"Because, sir, I believe you to be an impostor and an upstart, that has contrived by some underhand means to win Miss Hastings' confidence. But it is time that her friends interfere. What right have you, I demand, to dare to speak to her; you don't belong to her class. She is a lady of education and standing. Keep your attentions for those in your own class."

His hearer stood still as a rock during this tirade, paling and flushing alternately, but as the other concluded he sprang forward, and placing his left hand on Roland's right shoulder, he held him in a grasp of iron. Then, his eyes blazing like fiery globes, he hissed in low, determined tones:

"I take such language from no man. Take those words back at once."

"Release me, you insolent scoundrel," returned the other, who was not deficient in natural courage when aroused, and was also something of a boxer, having spent considerable time in cultivating the manly art. "You won't? then take that!" aiming his left hand full at the Russian's head.

His blow was avoided by a quick movement of his antagonist's head, and the next instant Roland was raised off his feet entirely, and hurled to the ground with a force that left him quivering like a jelly. Then, while lying on his back, half stunned, he heard a voice above him say, in mocking tones:

"When you ask my name and business again, you will perhaps have learned to act like a gentleman. Good-by. Who is the impostor and upstart now?"

So saying, Adolph strode away, and yet with a troubled, vexed look upon his face, in marked contrast to the cheerful aspect he had worn ten minutes before.

After a minute or so, the would-be champion of the social position, lifted himself slowly and painfully into a

sitting posture and gazed around. He had been hurled to the earth so quickly and forcibly that, although by no means a weakly man, yet he knew he had been but a child in the powerful grasp of his antagonist.

"The strong brute! Like all of his class they keep their muscles so well developed by labor, that it gives them, occasionally, an advantage over their betters. Ugh! but that shoulder stings; he wrenched it badly."

So saying, the young man rose to his feet and went homeward, muttering imprecations on his foe. But the effect of the whiskey had now disappeared, and the defeated youth, in spite of his wrath, could not help an uncomfortable feeling that he had made a fool of himself, and been justly punished. He had, too, a feeling that he had angered Elsie by his persistent efforts to force his society upon her. Again, the harrowing thought, that he had grossly insulted onewith whom the young mistress of the Hermitage was on terms of decided friendship, would persist in obtruding itself. Altogether he reached his room in a state of mind which rendered him quite oblivious of any physical suffering as a result of his severe bruises and the shock he had experienced.

He decided not to meet the family at dinner, and leaving an excuse of going out to dine, after hastily changing his dress, he started for the village, to take counsel with his friend Esmond. He found that cheerful gentleman in his room, and was soon narrating his adventure.

"St. Johns, I never dreamed you were such an infernal fool; I put it mild, you observe, for my inclination is to use language which would be more equal to the occasion. Why, what right had you to call him to account; and you might have known that he would not stand everything! If Elsie finds this out I am afraid it is all over with you."

"I begin to think I have made a fool of myself," said the now thoroughly mortified Roland, who had felt sure that

his companion would fully indorse his action and commend him for his valor; "but I lay it on that glass of whiskey which you advised my taking."

"Stuff and nonsense; why damn it, man, can't you stand a glass of bitters without making an ass of yourself? I advised you to take it, without supposing you were such a milksop. There, keep cool. I suggested it just to steady your nerves, and you go—ha! ha! ha!!!" and here the speaker threw himself upon the sofa and indulged in a prolonged peal of laughter, which incensed the other almost beyond endurance.

"I don't think you ought to laugh at me, anyway. You advised my going to watch them, and it was very natural I should lose my temper to see that scoundrel spooning around Elsie."

Roland said this so piteously, that the other really felt some compassion for him and changed his tactics.

"Cheer up, old chap, it was very natural after all. Don't know but I might have tackled him myself, if I'd seen 'em together. But I can make it all right yet, only Elsie must not know of this meeting or it will work bad for our cause, for women always admire the fellow who whips, and according to the latest returns that fellow wasn't Roland St. Johns."

"Well, what do you propose doing. How will you keep it from Elsie? He'll be sure to tell her!" said his listener, despondingly.

"Oh, you leave that to me. This fooling's got to stop. I'll have to exert my cousinly authority, and if that doesn't do, I've another card to play, and it's a right bower and is sure to take the trick every time. But you've had no dinner I guess?"

The other admitted the fact, and indeed now began to feel the need of refreshment.

"Well, I'll just order a nice little dinner to be sent up, and then I'll tell you my plans."

## CHAPTER XX.

### A CRISIS.

THE HERMITAGE, Monday.

DEAR SIR: With this you will receive the books I promised you, and I am sure you will find them of great help in your studies. Anything father or I can do to assist you in your work will be a pleasure to us, and I do hope you will not be backward in seeking such aid. I allude more particularly to my father, I being a learner myself. Father says he purposes visiting you on Wednesday, if you will meet him at the same place and time, to conduct him to the Cave. Home duties will hinder me from accompanying him, which I much regret.

Faithfully yours,

ELSIE HASTINGS.

In consequence of this note, Mr. Hastings found himself again in the underground mansion, as he termed it, on Wednesday morning about eleven o'clock, having been duly met and conducted there by Adolph. He was introduced to the new inmate, Ivan, a fine, tall, very muscular looking fellow of about forty. Coal-black hair and eyes, and a deep, swarthy complexion, together with a certain quick, watchful, alert bearing, gave him somewhat the appearance—Mr. Hastings at first thought—of a wild Cossack leader, but a further acquaintance proved him to be mild mannered and of courteous speech. An air of dogged, almost sullen submission, as if everything he said or did was under duress, was, the visitor thought, quite noticeable at first; but this gradually passed away, or was not so marked, as he became interested in the conversation.

The Patriarch's bright eyes shone with added brilliancy on meeting his guest.

"Your coming is refreshing, my son, as the dew on the flowers. You bring light to our household."

Soon the party of gentlemen were engaged in earnest conversation, and Mr. Hastings was pleased and surprised to find that the fugitive from Siberia spoke English very well, having learned it from a fellow-prisoner during his bondage.

The visitor, after carefully listening to the details of the case, was glad to be able to assure them that Ivan need have no apprehensions of re-arrest, supposing he should be tracked by the Russian detectives.

"Your offence being purely political, not criminal, and, as you say, you were merely arrested and condemned as being a member of a society known to be inimical to the government, but no positive proof adduced of your complicity in the alleged guilt of your associates, you are not a convict in any sense over here, and your case does not come under the extradition laws."

"But will American law acquit me if I kill the man who tries to arrest me?" asked the escaped Russian, eagerly.

"Certainly, unless he has a proper warrant. Without that you can resist to the best of your ability, and in any case don't be arrested if you can help it. And should such attempt be made, immediately notify me or some other magistrate or lawyer."

"Then the man who tries to take me will have a warm time," returned the sinewy-looking foreigner, touching significantly a pistol in his belt.

As Mr. Hastings looked at this powerfully built man, with his muscles like iron from constant exercise, and that tremendous pent up energy which seemed to flash out at each motion, accompanied with the expressed determina-

tion never to be taken alive, he realized what a formidable antagonist he would prove in case of emergency.

"I should suggest that you go before the proper officer in Melville, and declare your intentions of becoming a citizen of the United States, and take out the necessary papers. I think you said you intended to remain permanently in this country?"

"Yes, sir; I shall never return to the false mother who treats her children so badly. I stay here forever."

Ivan had not suffered the degradation and physical injury of being flogged, although most of his companions had. One of them, who had been sentenced to four thousand strokes, died soon after from the terrible shock and fever which ensued. He said when a large number of strokes are to be suffered, the convict can elect to take them in two instalments, or even more if he chooses, the second dose to be given on recovery from the results of the first. Few entirely recovered from the effects of the frightful punishment when the number of strokes was four thousand or upward, and if not so divided the life would, in most instances, be sacrificed. Not having to undergo this infliction, and being rather a favorite among the officials, Ivan had come from his ten years' captivity in comparatively good health and strength. He declared that a few months in the air of freedom would restore him, he felt confident, to more than his original vigor.

Nadia and the little maiden came in after a while, and it was delightful to the visitor to see the fond, clinging affection of the reunited parent and child. Sophia sat with her arm in her father's, chirping to him in the—to one listener at least—strange-sounding vernacular of the Muscovites, but yet pleasant to the ear, as the expression of sympathy and affection ever must be whatever the tongue employed.

The guest asked a number of questions about life in Siberia, which were answered in full by the ex-convict.

Ivan had to wear leg-chains, or fetters, during the entire time, as had all the prisoners. These did not, he said, interfere very seriously with locomotion or work, but gave an ever-present sense of degradation and hindrance. The prison was situated near a large military station or fortress, and the inmates numbered about three hundred. There were nearly all grades of criminality represented, from the cold-blooded murderer to the mere pickpocket and the tramp. There were men of education and refinement, who in a moment of passion or jealousy had committed a crime; and hardened highway robbers, who could neither read nor write, sullen and brutal fellows, only waiting opportunity for the commission of fresh crime. Those who had committed a capital crime were placed in the Special Department. The political prisoners were treated somewhat more leniently, but this largely depended upon the officer or "major" in charge. Singular enough, Ivan said, that more than half of them could read and write well. Many of the convicts were sentenced to spend a certain number of years in the prison, and then sent to one of the convict colonies for the rest of their lives, free to engage in any occupation they chose, but not permitted to leave the locality. Certainly the majority of the convicts, so far as he could discover, the refugee said, were sentenced to perpetual exile after the term of their punishment had expired. Many of these were branded on the brow, an ever-abiding evidence of their shame, and society had cast them off forever. They averaged about ten years in the prison. Many were military prisoners, only sent for short terms, for insubordination or deeds of violence, and then returned to their regiments. But those in the Special Department had been condemned to penal servitude for life.

"How much longer did you have to serve?" asked Mr. Hastings, who was deeply interested in this recital of a life which is little known to the outside world.

"Two years more. I was in on a ten years' sentence," replied Ivan.

He further, in answer to another question, described their garb, each department having a peculiar uniform, two colors generally being used—jackets half brown and half gray, and trousers to match, and some had gray coats with dark-brown sleeves. The heads of all convicts had to be shaved, but even this was peculiar, some having half the head shaved laterally, while others had the front part only shaved from ear to ear, giving a preternatural expanse of forehead.

"My impression of the great majority of the Siberian convicts has been that the larger part were pretty good fellows, hot-headed, imprudent, and impulsive, perhaps, but yet not criminal in the worst sense of the word?" remarked the visitor, inquiringly.

The Russian shook his head impressively as he answered.

"Not so, Mr. Hastings; my experience goes to show that the largest part of the convicts were terribly depraved, and society was well rid of them."

"But surely that would not apply to the political prisoners, sent there for similar offences to your own?"

"No, not in most cases; but after all, many of these men are fanatical, unreasoning, revengeful, and often atrociously cruel. Of course the infamous system of administering the laws, as well as the injustice of many of the laws themselves, is largely accountable for this demoralization of people who, under a better, more equitable system of rule, might be good, useful citizens."

"I think our mistake has been," said Mr. Hastings, "in supposing that most of the prisoners sent to Siberia were suffering for political reasons, when it is really a great penal settlement for all Russia."

These points of information were brought out in answer

to various questions, during the time the visitor spent in the Cave. Adolph often joined in the conversation, and Mr. Hastings was struck by the discernment and good sense he evinced, generally going at once to the foundation of the subject.

"Our friend has been sadly used by his countrymen," remarked the Patriarch, and his escape is wonderful, and he must tell you about it some time; but unfortunately, there are many interesting details that can only be related to members of the order. I have hoped that perhaps we shall be able to count you and your dear child among the friends of Russia."

"Indeed, we are both friends of Russia, and as Americans, must be deeply interested in any country so bound down, crushed, and humiliated by despotic power as yours is. I have thought over what you told me, and read the little work you sent me, and do not see anything to hinder us from joining you as associate members. By associate members, I understand those who are not bound to carry out any orders which conflict with their own sense of justice, expediency, and right?"

"Exactly," said the Exile; "after you are initiated you remain free as before, so far as action is concerned. You simply bind yourselves to reveal nothing imparted to you in connection with the circle or its friends, and to aid them, in every way that your conscience and judgment approves, in furthering the great ends in view—the freedom of Russia and her emancipation from the slavery in which despotism, misrule, ignorance, bigotry, and superstition have so long held her. There are, as you know from the pamphlet, two circles, an outer and an inner. In the former, members are merely associate and as much at liberty as before. In the latter, members are bound to obey all orders, but can always appeal from any command if they so desire. We have scores of associate or outer-circle

members in this country, friends of freedom who say with one of your writers, "The world is my country. To do good is my religion."

So it was decided that the proprietor of the Hermitage and his daughter should become associate members of the "Red Circle," and be initiated the following Friday morning, if nothing intervened. As Mr. Hastings explained to his child on returning home, and informing her of the arrangement:

"I suppose some of my friends would think us fairly demented, joining a sort of social order at the solicitation of a few foreigners, whom we had known such a brief period, and under such singular circumstances. But I feel deeply for these people, and most thoroughly sympathize with their object. Besides, we are under such weighty obligations that I am glad to please them by such a trifling thing as joining their organization."

"I am delighted, father, that you have agreed to this. I have wished it very much indeed, for it will enable us to influence and advise these noble friends for their good; for belonging to their order will give them confidence in us."

"I have done it largely to please you, my dear, and also for the reason you speak of. Joining the circle is a matter of very little importance to us, while to them, in their simple way of living and gauging things, it is of much importance."

Elsie's heart felt light and joyous, and yet she could hardly account for her buoyant feelings. To be sure she was much attached to the Cave friends, and rejoiced at the prospect of giving them pleasure, and also being brought into closer acquaintanceship with them. But she felt that this was not the sole cause of her good spirits. The St. Johns were about returning to town, preparatory to their annual sojourn at the ocean, and Elsie felt greatly relieved at the thought of their departure. And it was not any re-

proach to her hospitality or friendship that these feelings came unbidden, and were uppermost in her mind; for she was strongly attached to her guests, and with her hospitality was a duty and a pleasure. But she had felt strangely nervous and anxious concerning Roland lately, and wished him away from possibly evil influences. Then, again, his attentions to herself for some time had been so marked as to permit only one construction, and this pained her exceedingly. And she could not disguise from herself that her time had been so little at her command for the last few weeks, that her usual daily ride or walk had been largely abandoned, and, in consequence, many of her humble friends had been neglected.

We are such creatures of habit! and Elsie's rides and walks, and visits to certain poor folks that she had known from childhood, had become so essentially a part of her life, that somehow existence seemed to be in a degree empty and vacant, and she felt like one who, after a period of sickness and forced inactivity looks forward to a rapid convalescence.

The St. Johns were to start next morning, and Roland was disconsolate. In vain had he pleaded with his mother to be allowed to stay behind, urging that if it would not do to longer trespass on the hospitality of the Hermitage, he would stay at the hotel in Melville, where Harry Esmond was.

But his mother had her own reasons for proving obdurate. So much money had been spent by Roland lately in one way and another, and the assessments for mining purposes were so frequent that she felt that she would like to be home again, and have Roland there too.

"Well, I shall come down to see you once a week anyhow, old fellow," the young man remarked to Esmond, as he shook that astute friend by the hand at the hotel on the afternoon in question.

"Of course you will, and I will look after your interests over there;" pointing significantly with his thumb in the direction of his uncle's abode. "You're my friend, and I am going to see justice done you, I am. Don't be downhearted, man. I give you my word no dirty, ignorant foreigner is going to cut out any friend of mine, not if this court knows itself," and the speaker looked so manly and dignified, and spoke in such an oracular way that Roland took on new courage and helped himself to another glass of wine, which had been ordered up by the owner of the room to do honor to the guest and the occasion.

But yet a few hours later Roland, as said above, felt very disconsolate. What might happen while he was away? That hateful Russian!—for now he had satisfied himself as to the nationality of his enemy, although he had not been so successful in locating him, for no one seemed to know where he lived, although known by sight to many in Melville. And he had found, too, to his dismay, that many regarded him as a hero, and held grateful remembrance of his coolness and courage on the night of the Town-Hall fire.

Young St. Johns would dearly like to have given him another piece of his mind, and a second warning; but the memory of that strong arm was too vivid, and although not exactly timid, yet he dared not meet that face and hand again. A bright idea came to him. "I will write to him, and then I can put it as strong as I please." First, however, he decided to seek a private interview with Elsie, and so, as the evening was cool and pleasant and inviting, he proposed a stroll.

"I think Alf would like to go too, let me ask her?" said the young lady, anxious to avoid a private walk, if possible, on this last evening.

But Roland was equal to the occasion, and displayed a readiness of resource which Elsie had not anticipated.

"Well, you go and put on your hat, while I ask Alf. I know where she is."

There was no alternative; and so the young woman disappeared in quest of the hat, feeling sure that she and Roland would have the walk alone.

"Mamma does not wish Alf to go out just yet, but they will all go out with us when we return, or perhaps come to meet us," said the young diplomat, when she reappeared ready for the walk.

There was nothing for it but to face the inevitable, and so Elsie put the best face on the matter she could, but it was not quite so sunny a face as usual. She had a woman's intuitive perception of what might happen, and wished to avoid inflicting pain; in short, naturally shrank from what might be a very unpleasant experience.

"Elsie," began her companion, abruptly, causing her to look at him rather anxiously, as if fearful that he might have again resorted to artificial means to give him courage, "why do you try to avoid me? and why did you want Alf to come with us just now? Are you," and here the young man assumed an air of injured pride, "ashamed to be seen alone with me?"

The air and tone were so pompous that Elsie's risibilities were sorely tried, but she managed to answer quietly:

"How ridiculous, Roland; how could such a thing enter your head?"

"Well, ah—well—I thought it might be possible, but I allow it is highly improbable, you know. But, Elsie, you must allow that you have not given me a fair show; now have you?"

"A fair show! What do you mean? Please don't speak in riddles; but you always did like to tease."

"No, 'pon honor, I'm in earnest this time. You know I think everything of you, and yet I've been here six weeks and only had two walks with you."

"Two walks! Why we've been out walking nearly every day together!"

"Oh, yes!" he exclaimed, pettishly; "but you know what I mean. Mamma and the girls were always present. We've only had about two private walks that amounted to anything, and it's too bad."

She laughed heartily, at which he seemed highly indignant, so she hastened to atone by saying:

"But you'll be here often, and there'll be many opportunities in the fall when you come to see us again."

"Yes, but that isn't the thing. I want to say something to you special, and have been waiting for a chance this ever so long."

"Let us wait until we return to the house for the special thing, and then I shan't be so likely to forget it. Isn't that a pretty clump of trees over there? I have never seen a bit of landscape anywhere quite equal to that."

He regarded her reproachfully, as if surprised at her levity at that particular time, and answered, rather tartly:

"Why, you must have seen that a million times, and speak as if you had only just discovered its beauty. It is, I suppose, what would be called aw—rather pretty. Elsie, mother says I ought to get married and settle down, and I begin to think she's half right. What do you think about it?"

"What an idea—as if I could give an opinion on such a point. Well, I'll try and think some of these times what kind of a wife you ought to have, and write and tell you. How will that do? Now, perhaps, we had better be turning homeward, it looks something like rain."

"Not yet a while. Please sit down on this rock and rest. It's not going to rain."

So saying they sat down at a point which commanded a fine view of the country leading toward the Great Glen, which could just be noted by a practised eye by the deep fringe of woods which outlined it in the distance.

"Now, Elsie, there is no need for you or any one else to look out a wife for me, I've done that for myself, and I think I've just hit it. You're the one, Elsie—the one girl in all the world for me."

His hearer didn't know whether to laugh or cry, at this unmistakable declaration of preference, for she felt like doing both, and she saw the young man was as much in earnest as one of his nature could be, and then she half suspected, from one or two expressions she had heard, that the mother and sisters were with him in this matter. She remained silent, thinking that he might yet give her a chance of escape without committing herself.

"Why don't you answer me, Elsie? You know I love you better than all the world, and will make you the best of husbands. Mother always said I was just the one to make a woman happy. Come, now, say when it shall be, and then if you'll let me, I'll light a cigar, and we'll go home and tell them it's all settled."

"Now, Roland, you must put such thoughts out of your head. You and I would never do together, we're not adapted to each other at all. Why, we hardly think alike on any one point. No, I cannot listen to you about this matter. Let us talk about something else," as he attempted to remonstrate eagerly. "You will find someone you will like ever so much better than me. Won't you promise me to try and forget this talk, and we shall be just as good friends as ever?"

His manner changed at once, as he saw how quietly resolute she was, and he knew her well enough to know that she meant every word she said. He turned aside for a moment so that she could not see his face, and then wheeling sharply round, with lowering brow and a fierce light gleaming in his eyes, he hissed out angrily:

"It's that whelp of a Russian that has come between us. He's crossed my path. Let him beware." His voice fairly

shook with a passion she had never suspected he could exhibit, and the last sentence was husky with excitement. She naturally felt indignant, and no longer thought of soothing him.

"If you are going to talk that way I shall leave you. You are unjust."

She had remarked, during the past few weeks, how thoroughly changed, indeed, young St. Johns had become. The affected, languid manner which had once distinguished him, had given place to a nervous fretfulness of tone and bearing which showed a heart ill at ease. He was, to be sure, still the conceited fop at times, but, since associating with Harry Esmond, his style had been modified by degrees, and the drawl and affectation of London snobbery had largely disappeared, and been replaced by a certain craftiness of mien and a slangy *répertoire* which savored of the mining camps, or the fast life of Western cities. The truth was, Roland belonged to that class of humanity which naturally take to wearing livery. Lacking strong individuality themselves, they instinctively seek a master, and having found him, soon sport his colors, and wear his coat-of-arms in manner and language. Like the genus Hyla in zoology, they become so like the tree on which they rest, that they seem a part of it.

The young man we are speaking of was imitative and receptive, and was moulded by the society in which he moved. He was now arrayed in Harry Esmond's livery, just as he had been previously attired in that of some fast young men in the city who had been to "Yurrup" long enough to catch the mincing air and lingual imbecility of the English capital. Elsie's manner partly brought him to his senses, and he hastened to atone for his hasty words.

"Forgive me, but I love you, you must know, and cannot help feeling dreadfully when a fellow like that comes between us."

He spoke so pitifully that she half relented her temporary show of resentment; but yet she realized instinctively that matters had come to such a pass now, that further temporizing was out of the question. She felt that she must speak plainly, very plainly, and so preclude the possibility of a repetition of this scene.

"Mr. Roland, let us understand each other thoroughly. You have asked me to marry you. Let me urge you to put away such an idea once and for all. It can never be. We are not adapted to each other in any way. Our ideas differ on nearly every point."

He broke in on her words, impetuously.

"I know, Elsie, I am not worthy of you. I am not what I ought to be, but you can make anything of me you wish. I shall be devoted to you. Only say you will, you will give me a hope, and I will do anything you wish. You can save me and make a man of me."

All the affectation and foppery were gone, and for once the much indulged and petted young man spoke from his very soul. Like all weak natures, he gravitated toward her strong life, and felt almost like one drowning, who sees the plank which he had agonized to reach slowly floating away on the tide, going farther and farther from his grasp every moment.

Elsie remembered at this moment Alf's pleading look as she had expressed the wish that she could like Roland well enough to marry him, and somehow she almost trembled as she thought of the possible life to which he might drift for want of some strong helper to guide and control him through his affections and better nature. Many a noble woman has immolated herself on such an altar, in the hope of saving and redeeming.

Perhaps it is right for a brave, good, useful swimmer to plunge into the raging water, with its hidden as well as obvious perils, to rescue some inferior fellow-creature who

is about to perish. And if the rescue is effected, and both safely reach shore, the world applauds, and all say and feel —"well done." But if, as sometimes happens, the brave one saves the inferior being, and loses his own life in the valorous attempt—what is said and thought then? Self-sacrifice is the highest form of human endeavor, when the object of salvation is a noble one. Yet to give the noble for the ignoble—the useful for the useless—gold for brass —is that wise? But, supposing the probabilities of salvation for the inferior are only one in a hundred, even if the superior is sacrificed, is such an attempt ever justifiable? Ordinary prudence, common sense, as well as the best intelligence must say, "nay." And yet this is being done in society every day. Noble lives—strong, virtuous, helpful lives—are being poured out like water in the vain hope of reforming and saving some wretched specimen of humanity, whose miserable remnant of a misspent existence—a shrivelled, warped soul, seared and burned out of all true shape by the fires of lust and self-indulgence—even if saved, is surely not worth the cost. For we have to remember that in many of these attempts the superior nature is lowered, degraded, and impaired in this struggle between good and evil, the latter being too strong; and so, what might have blessed the world, serves merely as fuel to feed the foul flames of the garbage heap.

Elsie's mind had been trained by a kind, wise friend—her father—who had impressed upon her that self-sacrifice is only noble if the object is a noble one, and success probable; otherwise it is both unwise and criminal.

"The man who, being unable to swim, plunges boldly into the water to save a companion, is a brave fool who, if he escapes drowning, ought to be punished. No one is justified in recklessly throwing away his life," he had said to her on one occasion, and she remembered it now as she confronted this youth, whom she earnestly desired to save,

and listened to his pleadings. These thoughts, the outcome of past reflections and conversations, flashed through her mind in a tithe of the time it takes to read them, and when her companion ceased—and we have given above a mere hint of the arguments he used, lover's logic and lover's sophistry—she had decided on her course.

"Roland, the man I marry must be strong enough mentally and spiritually to command my respect. He who has not manhood enough to resist temptation and be his own saviour, but looks to someone else for salvation—especially to one who naturally should expect aid from him—never ought to dare to marry. I should feel contempt for such a one, and contempt and love cannot dwell together."

He cowered before her indignant words, and felt at that moment how immeasurably apart they were.

"But, am I then not worth saving?" he ventured.

"Yes—a thousand times yes, but you must save yourself; no one else can do it. Others can only help. Any help that one so weak as I can give, I cheerfully offer. Let me be a friend—a sister, if you will—but no nearer relation is possible, and after a time you will see this as I see it and thank me. Now let us return. No one need be one bit the wiser for what has passed between us."

He attempted a feeble remonstrance, but felt impelled to acquiesce, and they walked homeward, she speaking quietly and naturally on common topics, and contented with the monosyllabic responses of her companion. They shortly met the rest of the St. Johns party and Mr. Hastings, and Elsie was satisfied, from the questioning looks of the elder lady and the curious side-glances which the girls cast on their brother, that the ordeal through which she had just passed, and which had tried her sorely, had been at least anticipated and connived at by the young man's female relatives. She felt somewhat indignant and hurt, and if opportunity had offered, would fain have retired to the pri-

vacy of her own room, and indulged in the luxury and relief of a good cry. But she was compelled to exert herself, as if nothing had occurred to mar her enjoyment, conscious all the time that her lady friends knew pretty well, or suspected, what had taken place, and that she had wounded them through the son and brother. As for Roland, he excused himself soon from the party, saying he had up to that moment forgotten an imperative engagement, which must be attended to ere returning to town. So the rest sauntered on, although for most of them the charm of the evening had somehow departed.

"Roland does not look quite himself, my dear Elsie; can you suggest any cause for the poor boy's evident depression?" asked his mother, keenly observing the young lady.

"It is very natural, mamma," quickly remarked Alf, willing to save her friend the annoyance of trying to answer a possibly awkward question. "Roland is much attached to this place, and feels our leaving very much."

The young lady's mother looked as if she wished she would mind her own business and speak only when spoken to, but Elsie's grateful look amply rewarded the independent Alf, who, when in the country associating with her friend of the Hermitage, seemed to borrow courage and self-reliance from the latter, however she might disguise and restrain such qualities when in the city. Indeed, Mrs. St. Johns had remarked to her elder daughter, only the day previous: "We must go home, for Alf's sake. Her very nature seems to change when with Elsie Hastings for any length of time. Elsie is the dearest girl in the world, in spite of her gaucheries and country ways; but it would break my heart if either of my daughters had such outré manners. It would ruin us all with our set."

In the meantime Roland was making his way to Melville to seek a sympathetic ear. He was soon in the apartment of his friend, who seemed surprised at seeing him.

"Hello, St. Johns, what in thunder brings you here again? You said, on bidding me good-by three hours ago, that I should not see you again for a week at least. Something's wrong, by the holy poker, for you look savage. Out with it, man!" Seeing that Roland preserved a moody silence—"Has she given you the mitten, eh?"

"She is, as I told you, just infatuated with that damned Russian," said the other, savagely.

"Ha, ha, a little jealousy! Would like to make mincemeat of the aforesaid Muscovite! Yes, yes, but don't care to try his strong arm again."

His hearer winced as if a hot iron had touched him.

"Oh, we'll fix that fellow. Now tell me all about it. Did you propose, as I told you?"

In a short time Esmond was in possession of the whole story, and a long conversation ensued, at the conclusion of which the visitor left the hotel looking much more cheerful than when he had entered.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE RED CIRCLE.

Friday arrived, and the Hermitage being free of guests once more, Mr. Hastings and Elsie were early at the rendezvous, ready to be escorted to the cave. They were met by Adolph, who said that Hiram would join them before they reached the place where they had to be blindfolded. All were in capital spirits, for the morning was delightful, and the consciousness that they were free to leave home without violating any laws of hospitality gave an additional zest to the excursion. Also to Elsie, the thought of becoming a member of an order which had in one way and another occupied a good deal of her thoughts during the past few months, threw a film of romance over the entire proceedings, that was peculiarly fascinating to youth and health. On the way, their companion showed that he had made excellent use of the books sent him, by his clear, practical observations on the flora and geological formation of the neighborhood. It was surprising to Mr. Hastings, who had considerable acquaintance with these sciences himself, to note how clear and accurate his observations were. "Yet," as the Russian explained, "I had a large practical knowledge of these matters before, but lacked the scientific terms and classification and exact definitions which the books supplied."

"Still, how could you get on at all, without names for the flowers and plants?" asked Elsie. "I never could, I am sure."

"Certainly, Miss Hastings, I had names for them. Some I used to distinguish by the common local terms; and, where I could not find out the names, I gave them names myself, and also classified them after a plan of my own. I must show you my botany, some day; it is about two hundred pages of writing."

"And have you done the same thing in geology?" asked Mr. Hastings, who had listened with amazement at the marvellous perseverance shown by this natural student.

"Yes, but here I had to invent almost everything; for few around here, that I have associated with, know anything of geology. But then the men who wrote the books had to do the same thing at first, did they not?"

"And you are the man they say is not educated," said Elsie, impulsively.

Adolph's deepened color and her father's surprised "Elsie!" warned her that the remark was an unfortunate one.

"I ask pardon," she said, blushing in her turn. "I did not mean to speak so bluntly; but I heard the remark, and the injustice of it came home to me very strongly just then. Please forget what I said, Mr. Adolph. Father often tells me about my speaking and doing so much on impulse."

"There is nothing to apologize for, or try to forget, either, my dear friends, if I may call you so," returned the gentleman, who showed no annoyance in his manner, but rather a humorous appreciation of the remark. "Whoever said so was quite right. I am an uneducated man. I only know how to read and write; but, as they are keys to most knowledge of the schools, at least, I may hope to know a little more, some day."

"I question if your education to-day, modestly as you speak of it, isn't more valuable than that of half the students who graduate yearly from our colleges and universities," answered Mr. Hastings, warmly. "Much of college

knowledge is a mere counterfeit resemblance, so far as life is concerned—cramming dead languages, and neglecting living ones, including their own ; giving unstinted toil to solve worn-out problems and investigate defunct issues, while the grand questions and live issues of our own day are demanding attention at every step. Ordinary college training simply inflates the average student, and sends him, balloon-like, floating down his generation, pompous and conceited, and of little value to the world, unless a friendly pin causes a collapse, and so shows him the true nature and value of his freight."

Hiram soon joined the party, looking as good-natured and grotesque as usual ; and as Elsie returned his respectful and affectionate greeting, looking up to the extraordinary figure, the appropriateness of the nickname " Giraffe " came home to her sense of humor as it had never done before. She could not resist glancing at her companion, who met her eye with a quiet smile, which showed he interpreted her thoughts.

" Hiram, my friend," said the Russian, " I know you are glad with me that this is the last time that we shall have to ask our honored guests here to submit to the indignity of the bandage."

" Darn my butes, ef I doan't feel jest so."

" Why, you mustn't think we mind such a trifle," said Mr. Hastings. " Of course, one prefers the use of all the senses ; but we don't mind letting you and Hiram act as eyes for us, for a while. Do we, Elsie ? "

She laughed merrily.

" No, indeed ; it's a good thing to give the eyes all the rest possible, and four eyes ought to be able to do the seeing for four people." So saying, she first adjusted the handkerchief on her father's head, and then submitted her own to the same operation at the hands of Adolph. After walking a few moments, Hiram, who was a little in advance, leading

Mr. Hastings, suddenly stopped, and motioned to the other couple to do the same.

"Durn it, friend Adolph, some pesky varmint's a follering on us."

All listened carefully; but no sounds could be heard, except such as always fill the country air, making the stillness audible.

"If it was anyone else but Hiram, I should say it was a mistake; but he never fails," said Adolph.

"The Giraffe" in the meantime had laid himself prone on his face, with one ear pressed close to the ground. Presently, he arose.

"The pesky critter's a follering on us, sure. Only one varmint, an' he's a city-rat."

Adolph listened too, with his ear close to the ground, and presently was able to catch the sound of a crafty footstep, which was much nearer and more distinct in its fall than when the trapper detected it.

"Perhaps it would be wiser to defer our visit to-day, and come some other time," remarked the proprietor of the Hermitage.

"Not at all," replied Adolph. "Hiram will settle with this rash intruder, and join us at the cave. Allow me to take your arm, Mr. Hastings."

So saying, holding an arm of each of the visitors, he led the way forward, while the "Giraffe" disappeared from sight almost like magic. He seemed to sink his tall form right into the ground. The region was covered with trees and bushes, so it was not a difficult thing for the spy, if such he was, to keep out of sight, and equally easy for those he was tracking to avoid his eye. A couple of moments perhaps after the two had left Hiram, a man emerged cautiously from the bushes and moved noiselessly across the small open space, where they had stood deciding on their course after Hiram's announcement, in the direction they

had taken. A second later and the stranger felt himself grasped firmly by the hair by some force from above and lifted bodily into the air. He struggled violently, half wild with terror, but the giant hand relaxed not a bit.

"Durn my butes, but yer a purty sight, anyhow, so ye are," reached his ears and satisfied him that it was humanity in some form he had to deal with.

"Let me go, you scoundrel. If you want to rob me take what I've got, but let me go."

"Let ye go—ha! mighty skeered ye be naow, ain't yer? Wall, 'spose yer let go—guess yer'd better stir yer hoofs kinder smartish like ter hum. Whoop! but I kinder feel like raising yer ha'r for yer. Durn yer, what yer doing 'bout these diggin's poking yer nose inter what don't consarn yer nohow? Now get—whoop!" and suddenly setting the astonished and trembling spy hard down he gave him a by no means gentle application of his foot to help him in the way he should go, at the same time emitting a cry that would have done justice to the lungs of any brave that ever traversed the war-path.

Esmond, for it was he, partly from the impetus given him and partly to put himself safely beyond the reach of the formidable hand, dashed wildly forward a few steps, and then trembling with anger and chagrin at the outrage to which he had been subjected, turned and faced his enemy. The tall, gaunt form stood in grotesque dignity with his right hand pointing, like a huge sign-post at a crossing, in the direction in which he had propelled the young man. So gigantic was the size, and so altogether strange and formidable the appearance of the trapper, who purposely gave himself every inch of height he possessed, that the first impulse of Esmond, who was courageous enough commonly, was to beat a hasty retreat. But mastering this inclination, and yielding to a burning desire to revenge himself, he suddenly drew a revolver—a weapon he never was with-

out—and levelled it at the hunter. But the movement had been seen and anticipated by his sharp-visioned enemy.

"Stranger, put up yer shooter. I've got the drop onter yer," and the surprised Australian found he was looking into the barrel of a "shooter" at least three times as large as his own. There was no alternative, and so the smaller weapon was promptly lowered with a bitter imprecation by its owner.

"You hideous vagabond, I'll meet you again and teach you what it is to interfere with me."

Just then a wild pigeon flew above the two, a quick movement on the part of the trapper, a report, and the bird fell dead at Esmond's feet.

"Durn me butes, I kinder 'spected to tooken the critter's head off. Day-day, stranger—better trot, I'm getting sort o' riled."

After such an exhibition of marksmanship Esmond felt less inclined to tarry any longer, and so after shaking his fist at him, with an oath he left the hunter alone. The latter burst into a loud, harsh, mocking laugh as the other disappeared.

"Durn my butes, the critter thought'd scare suthin' with his pop-gun, ha! ha! ha!"

The three awaiting the arrival of the trapper near the mouth of the cave heard the shot and felt some anxiety as to its cause and result.

"That's Hiram's pistol. I know the sound of it. Just as likely as not he has fired to scare the other or add emphasis to his remarks." Elsie was trembling a little for her old friend, but these words reassured her somewhat. However, all were relieved when the trapper presently came up laughing to himself at his adventure. They insisted on hearing the story, which was narrated in such a graphic way as to afford great amusement.

"But who was it?" asked Mr. Hastings.

"Some pesky critter from the taown," returned the "Giraffe," evasively, giving at least two of the party the impression that he knew more than he chose to say regarding the identity of the individual who had followed them. The bandages, which had been removed by Adolph when they halted in a clump of bushes near the entrance of the cave to await the trapper's arrival, were now reapplied and the party passed underground once more. On reaching the familiar apartment they were greeted by the voice of the Exile, who welcomed them warmly, and requested that they remain with the eyes darkened until the ceremony of initiation had so far progressed as to admit of their being restored to sight.

"We do this, dear friends, in order to avoid the necessity of blinding thee again, and we will proceed at once to initiate thee unless otherwise desired."

"We are both ready, and I think would rather have it over at once," replied Mr. Hastings.

So a few questions were asked and answered, and then the two neophytes were conducted round the room, receiving certain instructions and points of information bearing upon the aims and ends of the order they were entering. This occupied about fifteen minutes, and at the conclusion of this part of the ceremonies the bandages were quickly removed from their eyes, and Elsie and her father found themselves in the midst of a circle composed of six persons all clothed in scarlet from head to foot. These all clasped hands. A seventh figure of more imposing mien and somewhat different dress, but masked like the rest, stood in the circle facing them, and holding in his right hand a large beautifully formed and ornamented dagger, which was pointing upward over their heads. This person then gave a solemn invocation or prayer, asking that the great unseen spirit of justice, mercy, and truth might be with

the two friends who had entered the Brotherhood of the "Red Circle."

"The dagger is not an emblem of blood, but of justice, of self-preservation, the symbol of the primal law. Every creature has a right to defend itself and those dear to it, against oppression and wrong. Life implies and carries with it certain rights which are inalienable, so long as not forfeited by conduct which trenches upon the rights of others."

The nature and claims of the order were dwelt upon, and the grips, passwords, etc., given. As honorary members, or associate members, no obligation was imposed, except that of secrecy. Absolute obedience was demanded of full members, while optional obedience was only expected from the others.

"To help a brother in distress is imperative with us, as with all secret organizations, but with you this will be entirely a matter of conscience and judgment."

The speaker then added, after a pause during which the figures forming the circle slowly chanted what seemed to be a hymn in the Russian language! "The order you have joined is world-wide, for it is affiliated with societies or organizations having similar aims in every civilized country in the world, so that you are now members of a vast and powerful brotherhood—strong not merely in numbers and resources, but also in the proud consciousness of being banded together for a noble object—the freedom and elevation of the race." Much more was said having a similar purport, and the whole tone was lofty and dignified, and the entire ceremony impressive and inspiring. In the final scene the eyes of the new members were again covered, this time with a fillet of soft leather, having some symbolic characters inscribed upon it. They were then led to a seat, and in a few moments, the fillet being removed, found themselves surrounded by the familiar faces of the cave friends includ-

ing Nadia and Sophia, and also two strangers from a distance, who bore the names of Stefanovic and Perovskaia, and were officers of a circle in a distant part of the country. They had arrived a few days before on business connected with the order, and been prevailed upon to stay and assist at the initiation of the new members. Mr. Hastings found the former gentleman a well-educated, thoughtful man, and held a very interesting and instructive conversation with him. He referred to the Patriarch as "our Chief" and said he was at the head of the order in America.

"He is, indeed, a very superior man, and an original thinker."

"I fully agree with you," said Mr. Hastings, "and should say that his son has inherited a good deal of his father's genius."

"Mr. Adolph! Yes," smilingly assented Mr. Stefanovic, "but perhaps you are not aware that there is no actual blood relationship between these two?"

"Is that possible! Why, I have supposed from the first that they were father and son."

"And so they are in a larger sense than any father and son I ever met, but you must ask the Chief to explain this matter. It is singular he has not spoken of it before."

"This is one of the best days of my life," said Adolph, immediately after the initiation, as he offered his hand to Elsie, in congratulation. "To find you one of us gives us courage. You must not be ashamed of your co-members, for some of the noblest and bravest of earth's children are united with us. I could mention names that would astonish you—world-wide names, whose owners are devoted workers with us."

"Well, in spite of your daggers and bloody circles, I do not think it was so very dreadful after all," returned the young lady. "Now I think father will quite understand about the house and circling fence."

"Chief," said Stefanovic at this moment, "our new member here, Mr. Hastings, is rather surprised when I tell him that you and our esteemed friend Adolph are not related by blood, and yet consider yourselves father and son."

The Patriarch did not seem surprised or annoyed, as the new member referred to feared he might be, at this abrupt statement, but smiling pleasantly, answered promptly: "Our friend Stefanovic speaks truly, Mr. Hastings. There is no natural blood relationship between Adolph and myself, but yet he is really and truly my child, if evidence is worth anything."

"Father has a theory of human development, which after explaining to you, will remove in some degree what seems so strange and contradictory in his statements," explained Adolph, answering the look of amused perplexity in Elsie's eyes, saying which he quietly withdrew from the apartment.

The Patriarch continued: "I was perhaps wrong not to have explained to you, my friends—doubly so now, if that were possible, since you have become members of our brotherhood—the actual relationship existing between my beloved Adolph and myself, but I thought best to defer it until after your initiation. However, I now gladly avail myself of the opportunity afforded to speak of this matter, and others akin to it. I am afraid you will think me a sad dreamer and visionary, Mr. Hastings, but these thoughts which I am to present to you are not merely the vagaries of senility, but have had mental lodgment with me for over half a century. Many, many years ago, before winter with its snow visited this head of mine, I was the happy father of a gentle, loving boy. Some fourteen years ere this, my beloved wife, who had so bravely faced the battle of life with me, and nerved me to my duty—my faithful Sophia, had died, leaving a baby-boy, a few days old."

The old man paused a moment or two, and closed his

eyes, as if oppressed by the painful images of that past he was engaged in resurrecting.

"As you may suppose, my life was largely wrapped up in the child; and I resolved, God helping me, to bring him up worthy of her who was gone. The little Adolph grew to be the joy of my widowed heart. Docile, affectionate, apt and ingenious, he was all I could wish. Unfortunately, being blind to his physical frailty, I fostered his eager desire for knowledge, leaving the body to care for itself. His love for the natural sciences was remarkable, and his knowledge of botany and geology phenomenal for one of his tender age. But, alas! as the spirit grew, the body faded: lung trouble showed itself; a few months of wasting sickness, and my boy, my dearly beloved child, then passed out of my life, leaving me as one from whom the light had departed—the future looming before me as one continuous night, unbroken by a single star. One thing saved me from absolute despair—the belief, which I had long entertained, that a large number of those who leave this life of earth return to it again, either immediately or within a brief period. This opinion, or rather fixed belief, I had arrived at by slow process of thought and numerous observations in the world of human life. I had succeeded in tracing out, to my complete satisfaction, several cases of such re-incarnation. So I roused myself from my lethargy of sorrow, feeling assured that I should again see my child in earthly form, that again he would form part of the human family. Yet the belief that I should once more clasp the gone one to my bereaved heart was, you may say, resting upon exceedingly slender foundations, even supposing that my re-incarnation theory was susceptible of proof. For how could I have knowledge of all the children born into the world within a year or so of my child's death? I am aware that the entire thing looks wild and fanciful in the extreme, and that any man's sanity might justly be

doubted, who should expect such a thing, or even claim it was possible. But belief is a curious thing—not governed by fixed laws, or necessarily related to mathematics.

"As you may conceive, having such a hope I was ever on the alert, and finally Providence, or my good angel—or instinct, or if you will, chance—at length justified my faith and rewarded my efforts. Some years after my loss, I found my child. It was a mutual recognition. I knew him at once, and upon uttering his old name—the name of my boy—he looked up in a puzzled way, and at once responded and came to me. Some other time I will tell you, if you wish, how I was directed to the then home of my child; now I will simply tell the main story. He was the youngest of a large family. The parents were hard-working, strong, healthy people, honest and intelligent, belonging to the laboring class, and the little fellow was having every advantage for physical development. After satisfying myself, by varied and repeated trials, that it was the soul of my Adolph that lived in the rugged form of this humbly-born child, I resolved to use all legitimate means to induce these worthy people to resign him to me. It was a delicate, and, to most, would have seemed a hopeless task; but, to my surprise and relief, they did not make the opposition which I had anticipated. They had a large family, as said, and their means were limited; and this child differed so much from the others, in his tastes and desires, that already the parents began to entertain fears of his future. 'We cannot afford a gentleman in the family,' said the good woman; 'and although Roger is willing and industrious, yet the little fellow seems to be always longing and looking for something which we haven't got. His language, too, is different from that of his brothers. He uses better words, and says he means to be a scholar when he grows up; and so, dear as he is to us, if a good home offers for him, where he can have better schooling than we can give him, why,

his father and I are willing to let him go.' This was expressed in the homely, simple style of her class. I made the worthy people a substantial present, and brought Adolph home. The name Roger was not mentioned afterward in speaking of or to him, and he made no allusion to it himself, only on one occasion, when—about a year after I brought him home—a boy, in answer to my question, answered that his name was Roger ; and Adolph, who was standing near, immediately called out, 'What a funny name ! They used to call me that once,' at the same time laughing heartily. But I must not weary you further at this time—only to say, in conclusion, that the boyhood and manhood of Adolph have continuously proved to me that I made no mistake, but that he is my child."

"A most extraordinary narrative," said Mr. Hastings, smiling, and one which I fear would gain but little credence with most people. However, the metempsychosis or transmigration theory has always been a subject of interest to me ; and I shall be glad to converse with you again on this subject. It certainly opens up a field for curious investigation ; and life has taught me one lesson, at least, and that is, to be very cautious in saying what is, and is not possible, in connection with this curious existence of ours."

Perovskaia here remarked : "Such views of life and its relations are not so foreign to Russian ears as perhaps to others ; for we think that man is justified in speculating on the unseen and the unknown—not blindly accepting the dogmas of the past concerning it. Although I do not entirely agree with our Chief in many things, as every man should have a mind of his own, yet I think that this belief of his of returning to earth explains many things that otherwise are inexplicable."

Stefanovic then remarked that he had seen two cases very similar to that of the Chief and Adolph.

"Father, will not these friends come and see us, some time, at our residence?" asked Elsie.

"My house is open to them, and we shall be glad to see them," returned her father.

"I must speak for all," said Adolph, who had just come in. "Circumstances which you can understand, dear friends, will cause us to decline, at least for the present. Ivan Sobieski is, you remember, a refugee from penal servitude in Siberia, and in some danger—at least for a time. For his sake, we do not well to draw public attention on us, just now."

"Possibly you are right, yet I do not think your friend runs the slightest risk; but for a short time, perhaps, he had best remain quiet and retired. Some time in the future, when it seems more expedient, then we shall see you at the Hermitage."

"Sophia, I do wish you could come; I have so many things I should like to show you," said Elsie, fondly stroking the hair of the little Russian maiden.

"Can't I go, mother?" she asked, eagerly, in her native tongue, and pouted just a little when the mother shook her head. "I would like to wait on you and do things for you. May I, some time, please?" the little one pleaded, lifting her bright, expressive face to her friend.

"Perhaps you can, some day soon; we will see," said the young lady, in kissing her good-by.

It was pretty late in the afternoon when the father and daughter reached home, after an experience which was refreshing, if for nothing else than its being novel. New, at least, entirely to Elsie; to her father, new in the sense that the fresh page of the magazine is new, presenting thoughts which have come to us before, perhaps, but never in this particular form. The initiation was impressive; but to a Mason, as Mr. Hastings was, it was not startling or specially strange, for there is almost of necessity a similarity about

all these things; but the speculative theories of the Ancient concerning his child, coincided with some previous ideas which had obtained lodgement in his brain, and set him thinking. "At any rate," Mr. Hastings said to himself, "it is pleasant to meet with one who dares to think outside the old channels, and is willing to express those thoughts without reference to consequences."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### ENGAGED.

Next day, the Hermitage was again filled with visitors, so that Elsie's promised leisure vanished almost ere begun. Dr. Seaman and the Thompsons arrived unexpectedly from the West—the Englishman having received news from his partner in London which decided him to curtail his trip somewhat.

"But he will remain until after the wedding—only Warren must hasten up matters," said he, in announcing that the physician had captured the gentle Ellen's affections, and she had agreed to remain behind, and share the lot of a country doctor.

Yes, Warren had decided, amid the soft, suggestive influences of the evenings spent within hearing of the Great Cataract, that the English maiden was undoubtedly his P. C.; and, all opposers to the conclusion being calmly ignored, or else boldly set at defiance, he had on the last evening spent there, dared to tell her so, and asked her to renounce her country for his sake. The Grand Horseshoe was beautifully wreathed in a silvery mist, woven of Luna's bright beams in the warp of Niagara's spray, making a bridal-veil of exquisite pattern and beauty. The resemblance was dangerously suggestive; and Warren, the cunning fellow, took the cue from it, and pressed his suit. He did not realize how much it involved to the fair girl beside him—to give up native land, and parents, and brother and sister, for one that she had known only for a

few brief months. Ellen's lips quivered and her cheeks paled at the sacrifice ; but, it was the old story, and the lover conquered. The couple returned to the hotel—engaged—conditional, however, on parental consent. Mr. Thompson was a little astonished and slightly hurt at first, that he had not been consulted in advance by the gentleman, according to the English custom, but soon regained his customary good-humor, and said he supposed that when in Yankeeland one must submit to what the Yankees do.

"However, we must consult Mrs. Thompson about it; and, if she consents to lose her daughter in such fashion, why, I have nothing to say—only that I do wish, Warren, you were an Englishman, and going to practise your profession in England. You have a fine—yes, a magnificent country here ; but it is isn't England, by any means."

Time was, when Seaman would have taken up the cudgels for the "land of the free," and proved, so far as in him lay, that England shouldn't be mentioned in the same breath with America ; but he was not in a fighting mood on this particular evening, and felt that England was no doubt the best country on earth, since Ellen was its offspring, and of course America came next. And now, three weeks after this momentous occasion, they were back at the Hermitage, and Warren was making preparations to secure a suitable office. The marriage was to take place as soon as word was received from Mrs. Thompson ; for no doubt was entertained as to her consent being given, Warren being a prime favorite with her. The meeting between Elsie and the bride-elect was peculiarly interesting, such a thorough sympathy existed between them. Ellen blushed, and then burst into tears, as the young hostess congratulated her warmly.

"My dear Ellen," said she, fully entering into her feelings, then putting her arm around her waist, she led her into

a quiet corner, where they could be alone, and have a good talk all to themselves. This was just what the tender-hearted, affectionate stranger needed, and she opened her heart to her companion. Ellen was at this time pining for her mother, to whom she could have gone and unbosomed herself; and Elsie, wisely discerning this necessity, gently and tenderly invited her confidence, and so gave her an opportunity to relieve her overburdened heart. The good cry and the free conversation did the young girl a world of benefit, and established a friendship between her and the American friend which was a source of great comfort to both.

One might have supposed that Louisa would have been the natural confidant of her sister; but, although very fond of each other in a true sisterly way, yet they were by nature so essentially unlike that a very full exchange of confidence was impossible. They could not quite understand each other. On the other hand though Elsie and Louisa were much alike in their general characteristics, both being self-reliant and courageous, yet the latter lacked, to some extent, a thorough sympathy for weaknesses which were foreign to her own nature, while the former could, in a marked degree, put herself in the place of the weak one, and realize how she might, under certain conditions, feel and act similarly. Both had strength, both were kind-hearted; but Elsie had a warm sympathy and pity for emotions and feelings which she did not herself share, while Miss Thompson found it at times difficult to avoid a feeling akin to contempt for what appeared to her stronger nature a foolish yielding to weak sentiment or superficial emotion.

"Elsie, Elsie! how can I give up my mother? I sometimes feel as if I had done wrong, and acted undutifully in yielding to Warren; and yet I love him more than I can tell," she added, her mood somewhat changing. "But oh,

sometimes it does seem dreadful to let father and Louisa go home, and leave me here alone!"

"Dear girl, you wont be alone; and Warren is one of the best fellows in the world. I am so glad you are to be my new cousin—no one else could I like so much." And then, in answer to Elsie's questioning, she told her all about it, and they had a mutually pleasant talk, and at the end of the half hour Ellen felt quite comforted.

"Please don't tell Louisa that I have been talking this way to you, Elsie. She would not understand, and say I was weak and foolish."

"Just as you desire, my dear cousin-to-be. But who is that calling me?"

"Why, Harry, is that you? Miss Ellen Thompson, of England, Harry; Ellen, this is my cousin, Mr. Esmond."

The young man glanced admiringly, and yet with a quick, half-suspicious look at the young lady; and then, in his usual easy, self-possessed way, addressed a few pleasant words to her.

"But, Elsie, if Miss Thompson will excuse us, I want to consult you, for a moment. You know cousins and brothers are always wanting something, Miss Thompson."

Ellen laughed, and told them not to mind her; for she was "going to write a letter," leaving the room as she spoke.

"Now, Elsie, I want to ask you who, in the name of all that is wonderful, is that talking with uncle on the lawn."

"Why, Harry, I believe you look actually scared. That is cousin Warren—Dr. Warren Seaman. You have heard me speak of him. It is time two cousins became known to each other. Come, and I'll introduce you."

"The same one that was in England lately, is it, Elsie?" said the other, who was scrutinizing Warren like a detective.

"Yes, the same; and he is engaged to that young lady, who was here just now. Come along."

"No, thanks, Elsie—some other time; I'm uncommonly busy to-day. By-the-by, can't we have a ride, this evening? I don't see much of you lately."

"Not this evening, I'm afraid, Harry; but some of these evenings, we'll have a chance."

"Deuced unlucky!" muttered the young man to himself, as he took a circuit to avoid attracting the attention of the party on the lawn.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A THUNDER CLOUD.

About three days after the return of Seaman and his friends to the mansion, Mr. Hastings received a letter, having on the envelope, "Ferns & Laycock, attorneys-at-law," etc.; and, as one will occasionally, gazed on the outside, trying to imagine when or where he had had any dealings with these gentlemen. Of course, it occurred to him a moment later that the best way to solve the problem was to open the letter, and find out. The same firm-name was on the upper left-hand corner of the letter, and on the other to the right the full names:

Anthony Ferns,
James H. Laycock.

Denbridge Wells, July 6, 18—.

Roger Hastings, Esq.

Dear Sir: Permit us to inform you, in the interests of our client, Arthur Liscomb, Esq., that the said Arthur Liscomb, having a prior claim on the property known as the Hermitage, at present occupied by you, has placed the matter in our hands with instructions to proceed at once to obtain legal possession. Proofs of said claim can be seen by you or your counsel at any time by calling at our office.

We are, sir, respectfully,
Ferns & Laycock.

An amused smile crept over the face of the reader, as he finished the above.

"Cool, I should say! What do you think of that, Warren?" handing the epistle to his nephew, who just then entered the library.

"Why, Uncle Roger, what does this mean?" cried the doctor in alarm.

"It simply means a piece of rascality to deprive me of my property," returned the other, grimly; "but I'm too old to be easily bluffed."

"But who is this claimant, Liscomb, and is this a reputable firm of lawyers?"

"Liscomb I know nothing about; and yet there used to be a Liscomb around here—a sort of real estate agent, who had a son, a pretty wild fellow, called Arthur, if I remember correctly. He went off abroad somewhere, and the father died shortly afterward. Surely it cannot be the son. He was rascal enough for anything, according to all I've heard of him."

"But these lawyers, uncle, are they reputable men?"

"I have never directly had any dealings with them, but I have heard St. Johns, who knew them, characterize them as a couple of scoundrels—shrewd and unscrupulous pettifoggers, who are always ready to take up cases upon speculation."

"What will you do about it? It seems to me not worthy any serious attention."

"Oh, it has something behind it, you may be sure, and I must consult St. Johns. I will just enclose him the letter, and act on his suggestions."

Three days later an answer came from his friend, telling him that he had demanded the grounds of claim from Ferns & Laycock, and he enclosed an abstract of their reply. The claimant was the son of Thomas Liscomb, the real estate agent, who had purchased the property from Nicholas Kuprianoff, who had originally laid out the estate and built the house. The real estate agent had died suddenly, shortly after buying the property, and before he had time to take possession, while his son and only child had left him for parts unknown some few months before. The

latter, now an old man of seventy or thereabouts, had returned after all these years to claim the property as his father's heir. Mr. St. Johns said the deed was dated back fifty-three years, while Mr. Whiteley's deed, from whom Mr. Hastings had purchased, was at least a year later. "Is it a forgery?" you naturally inquire. It would seem not, for they concede the possible genuineness of both deeds, but claim that the Russian fraudulently deeded the property the second time, after the sudden death of the first purchaser, hoping to escape detection, as the first transaction had not been made public. Nothing had been heard of the younger Liscomb until lately, when about a year since he wrote to request that any papers, etc., left by his father should be forwarded to him in New South Wales. Finding this deed among his effects, as soon as possible he wound up his affairs, and is now here to obtain possession of the fine property, out of which he claims he has been kept all these years.

"Don't lose any sleep over this affair, for I hardly think the Hermitage is in any danger of changing proprietors soon; but yet I am afraid we must fight these fellows, for they are as shrewd and unscrupulous as the old devil himself," said the writer, in conclusion.

Elsie was indeed astonished and indignant to hear of the attempt to deprive them of their beloved home, the place of her birth.

"It is an infamous slander," she urged, "against that old Russian who first owned and made the estate what it is, although of course it has been much improved since his time. I always heard he was the very soul of honor, and now to defame him in his grave! It is a conspiracy, father, and as Mr. St. Johns says, 'we must fight to the bitter end.'"

Her father smiled at her enthusiasm and assured her everything should be done to protect their home.

"Father," said Elsie, presently, as if a sudden thought had come to her, "wouldn't it be a good idea to consult the 'Patriarch' about this. He probably knew the original proprietor, being a fellow-countryman, and may be able to suggest something?"

"A good plan, Elsie, and in the meantime I will look up my deed and ascertain the exact date."

At dinner that day Mr. Hastings seemed absent-minded and more reserved than usual, which Seaman rallied him on, claiming that he lived too retired a life, and should take Elsie off for the trip that the visitors had just returned from.

"Just you go, uncle, and we will take charge of everything and keep matters in fine trim until you return."

"Indeed, I shall vote in the negative," observed Mr. Thompson, quickly; "for the short time of our stay in this fine country, I want to see as much of our host and his fair daughter as possible."

"Thank you," replied the proprietor of the mansion, "but if I was to disappear for a month at this particular crisis I am afraid I should find other occupants at the Hermitage when we returned."

"What do you mean, father? What have you heard further about that matter? Nothing since morning, surely?" said Elsie, in alarm, for she knew by her father's manner that something was wrong, more than she knew.

"I do not like to mention unpleasant facts at dinner, my dear, but as you have asked the question, I will say that I am much vexed at not being able to find my deed of the estate. It is not where I am satisfied I left it."

"Oh, father, I fear it was stolen during the robbery, then."

"But what could robbers want with a deed?" remarked Mr. Thompson, incredulously; "they could not use it in any way. Besides, I suppose these things are all registered in a public office, as they are with us?"

"That is very true," said the host, gloomily, "but the books of registration for the county were all destroyed in the fire which destroyed the Court-house this spring."

"But then, uncle, if there is nothing else, the great fact of undisputed possession for over a quarter of a century would be quite sufficient before any jury in the world," confidently returned Seaman.

"Not in the face of a prior deed properly attested, I am afraid. However, we must not borrow trouble, and indeed I feel guilty intruding this matter upon you at all; let us dismiss it. There will be some way out of the difficulty."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A BIT OF BLUE SKY.

The next day a very tender, carefully worded epistle arrived from Roland, asking Elsie to forgive any unkind words he had impulsively uttered, and hinting a hope that she would some day listen to his suit more favorably. "You are my ideal woman, dear Miss Hastings, and I cannot give you up. Just think of the long friendship between our families, and do not be deluded by a mere whim or fancy for one who is your inferior in rank and education."

The young lady realized, more keenly than the writer would have liked, how hard it had been for him to write in this temperate style of the foreigner, for one or two words, no doubt very different in sentiment, had been carefully scratched out and others written over them.

"Poor Roland, how I wish he was safely married and settled in life with someone who would supply his defects of character," she said to herself. Having known Roland from childhood she had a very sisterly affection for him, and she felt saddened now to think that this had been mistaken by himself and mother, if not by the rest of his family, for a more tender feeling.

Dr. Seaman had succeeded in securing a suitable office just in the outskirts of the village, in a part which was becoming very popular for residence, and new houses were springing up rapidly.

The house was a new one, and was offered to him on very advantageous terms, with the privilege of buying at a fixed amount at the expiration of a year should he so de-

sire. At his request Ellen inspected it before closing the bargain, and was much pleased with it.

"What a nice office for you, dear, away from the noise of the house."

"Ha, ha," he laughed, "the noise of the house, and this one of the quietest little women in the world. Why, Ellen dear, I think the noise will be shut up in the office ; you hardly dream what a restless mortal I am."

"Well, Warren, you can be as noisy as you like, and I will help you if it adds to your enjoyment," she responded, turning to him a face in which he read a bright future written in characters of tenderness and trust.

He felt in that moment as he had not before, how entire was the self-surrender of this gentle spirit, who was giving up so much to venture unquestioningly upon an unknown future with him, and inwardly resolved that she should never repent her choice.

"I am seriously annoyed about this trouble of Uncle Roger's. It will be terrible if those scoundrels should succeed in getting the Hermitage," Seaman said as they were walking home.

"Oh, surely it can never come to that if there is any justice in the country. I know you will smile at me, but I cannot help wishing the case was to be tried in England. I should have no fear of the result, then."

"Indeed, I don't smile at you, Ellen, for I found myself saying the same thing to uncle this very morning, for the administration of justice there is not subject to so many influences as here. But uncle has unbounded faith in St. Johns, and our judges, as a rule, are good men, at least those of the higher courts."

"Why, where have you two been ? I have been searching for you everywhere," said Elsie, when they reached the mansion, meeting them on the front steps with a letter in her hand.

"Everywhere! what a fib, Cousin Elsie. Everywhere is a pretty big place, and we certainly occupied one corner of it, did we not, Ellen?"

"But you have a letter for me," said the doctor, trying to snatch the epistle.

"No, sir, it isn't for you," the young lady replied, dexterously eluding his grasp. "It is for Ellen, and she shall have it when she tells me where you have both been, what you have been doing, all the nice things you have said to her, etc."

"I knew the letter was for me, and it is for me—that is, for my other me. Give it up at once or I'll arrest you for defrauding the United States males, of which I have the honor to be one."

So saying, the speaker sprang for his cousin, who, however, was too quick for him, and gaining the lawn was soon heading him in a rapid chase on the green turf.

"Bravo, bravo!" shouted Mr. Thompsom, who suddenly appeared on the scene. "I'll bet on Miss Hastings. Why, Warren, you're nowhere. Might as well chase Atalanta," and indeed the physician, although a pretty fast runner, soon found he was outmatched and was finally obliged to abandon the vain attempt to overtake the flying steps of the swift-footed maiden, and retreated to the starting-point, panting severely after his exertions.

"Mr. Thompson compares Elsie to Atalanta," remarked Mr. Hastings, who also had joined the group of spectators; "but it is very evident that you are not Hippomenes, Warren."

"No, uncle," said the young man as soon as he was able to speak, "but I have a strong suspicion that Hippomenes lives not a thousand miles from here, and some of these days we shall witness another race with a very different result," and the speaker glanced at his cousin mischievously.

Elsie, who was resting at a safe distance, felt her cheeks

flush and burn, she could hardly tell why, at the remark and glance of her conquered foe, but heated as she was by the race, this easily escaped the notice of all but the one who had caused it; and seeing that he was about to follow up his attack, she dropped the letter into Ellen's hand, saying, "You can make the confession after reading the letter," and then turning to her cousin with "For shame! outrun by a woman!" she disappeared in the house.

The letter proved to be from Mrs. Thompson, in which she gave unqualified permission for the marriage to take place, although regretting exceedingly that her child should not return home first, and saying that the thought of being separated from her by the Atlantic was at first almost appalling, but after reflection she had gradually become reconciled to it in the belief that she should see them for a long visit once a year. "To you, and you only, as the son of my old friend, could I trust Ellen under such conditions, but I have taken you into my mother's heart, and feel that my dear child is safe with you," she wrote to Warren in a postscript.

"Hurrah!" shouted he, as he finished reading, and, turning to the young lady with "What a jewel of a mother you have got, Ellen," folded her in his arms and kissed her before the amused spectators.

"Hold on, young gentleman," called out Louisa, "if you are going to be my brother-in-law, you must behave yourself better in company than that."

"Ah, I forgot; I owe you a brotherly kiss, don't I?—and will pay the debt forthwith."

"Run," said Elsie, making way for her, but Warren was too quick, and, catching her before she could escape from the veranda, after a vigorous resistance, succeeded in imprinting his lips upon her cheek, receiving in return a by no means gentle box on the ears, greatly to Mr. Thompson's delight, who clapped his hands loudly.

"Well done, Lou! Bravo, Seaman! Well, well, you can't say, Louisa, but what you have been kissed once, any how, against your will."

For a time, all vexations were forgotten or ignored in the excitement of preparing for the wedding, which was arranged to take place in a week after receiving Mrs. Thompson's letter, as the father and sister of the bride were obliged to set sail the week following.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### BURYING THE HATCHET.

A GLORIOUS morning! Yes, no other adjective would just express the elastic, exhilarating air, the exquisite poise and balance, the perfect adjustment between earth and sky and atmosphere and the sensitive beings dwelling in it. It was the resting-time of the year, neither summer nor fall, but both harmoniously blended together, and giving temperamental conditions which made it a joy simply to be—to live and breathe—one of earth's children.

It was little past six o'clock, for as yet the sun had not more than traversed a brief hour's path toward the zenith.

A horseman at the cross-roads, so often mentioned between the Hermitage and the big ravine, rode nervously up and down, pausing now and then to scan the landscape, especially in one direction, as if anxiously expecting some one.

"Can it be possible she did not receive my note," he muttered to himself; "but no—Hiram never makes a mistake. I must be more patient."

"After a few moments, his anxious eye detected a small cloud of dust in the distance; and the field-glass carried at his saddle-bow showed a horse and rider, rapidly approaching.

"It is she. Only one lady in the country sits a horse like that, and only one animal has that lengthy stride," he said to himself, in a tone of exultation, which showed that his previous impatience had flown.

"I am very late, but never mind. If it has not wearied

you too much, we still can have an hour, and the air is like nectar this morning."

"I must confess to a little anxiety and impatience," said the cavalier, as he turned his horse's head to ride beside her; "but, believe me, it was on your account. I feared something had happened to you, and cannot forget the little trick this wilful Gyp once played you;" and Adolph glanced admiringly at the sleek head of Elsie's pet, who erected his ears, as quite appreciating the remark.

"I must really thank you for your kind concern for my safety; but I have no fear of my pony, when I am riding him. Any freaks he may have he reserves for harness."

"Still," he persisted earnestly, "you must allow me to feel anxious for your safety; for you have come into my life, and given it a larger value, and to my world you have given a different atmosphere and meaning. I now have a future and a promise—a look forward—and I owe it to you; and I feel that I must thank you for it this morning."

"I should, indeed, be rejoiced to think that I had helped you, or could help one to whom I owe so much; but I cannot realize it at all. Indeed, I cannot. You are so strong and brave and self-reliant, I could as soon imagine this light breeze might affect that sturdy oak there as that one so frail and weak as I could aid or influence you in any way."

Elsie showed she was in earnest by her heightened color; but her companion at once returned eagerly: "Yes, yes; and that oak-tree vibrates in every branch and leaf and root to this little breeze. It thrills it in every fibre, and helps to form and change its life."

"You argue too well for me, and so I must yield; and, indeed, the bare possibility of being able, in the humblest way, to influence a noble life to higher effort is too pleasant to be entirely put away. But now, I must tell you why I asked you especially to meet me this morning."

Her companion bowed gracefully, saying: "Remember you enrich my life by asking my services."

"Many thanks: but before I proceed, let us gallop down this beautiful stretch of road;" and away they went, at a rattling pace, for about a mile.

Elsie then resumed: "The fact is, Mr. Adolph, father has been threatened with a lawsuit to rob him of his estate; and the circumstances under which the claim is made are very peculiar. It concerns a countryman of yours; and I thought that perhaps you or your father might be able to tell me something about him that might help to throw light upon what on the face looks like a very wicked transaction."

She spoke hesitatingly, and so different from her usual frank way that Adolph perceived that the matter was a serious one to her, and also that she felt a little diffidence in approaching him about it.

"Trust me, Miss Hastings, the matter is safe with me. Speak freely. If it is a countryman of mine who is trying to do this great wrong, father has much influence, and can undoubtedly help, or at least wisely advise."

Thus encouraged, she regained her usual self-poise and manner, and related the matter in detail. When she mentioned the name of the old Russian who was charged with having given the second deed fraudulently, an angry light leaped from the eyes of the listener, and he clutched his right hand on the whip-handle as if he would crush it to fragments. And as she concluded, he broke out abruptly:

"It is an infamous lie—a most unholy lie! Nicholas Kuprianoff was wholly incapable of such a thing. He was the very soul of honor."

"Thank you for saying so," said the young lady, gratefully. "I always felt it, and told father so. That good old man, of whom I have often heard, was, I am persuaded, utterly incapable of such an act. But he has been dead so

long that this knowledge will, I am afraid, avail us little now."

The Russian smiled, as he answered cheerfully: "Oh, no doubt father remembers him well; for the Patriarch"—and he regarded her humorously, showing that he was aware of the name she had given the old gentleman of the Cave—"is very old himself, as you know."

"Father says Nicholas must have been about seventy when he deeded away the estate, from all he can gather, and that was fifty years or so ago; so none but quite old people would remember him, because they must have been grown up at that time to be available as witnesses, I should think. But then, I know nothing about law."

"Can you not come and talk with the 'Exile'"—and here again he smiled—"for what you say may be quite true, and I am no more conversant with the technicalities of law than you are? I know he can be of valuable help in this emergency, and advise what is best to be done. Please to name a day, and I will meet you anywhere, and conduct you."

"But I thought I was free now to come and go as I pleased," she replied, laughingly; "but I am afraid I shall require your services, after all, for I never could find my way."

"You could find the cave-entrance, but the subterranean passage is tortuous and difficult to a stranger; and so I trust you will gratify me by——still considering me your conductor, ever at command."

So Elsie promised to communicate with him as before, and inform him when she would be in the vicinity of the cave-mouth.

"I think I had best proceed alone to that point," she said, "because I have reason to believe that I am being watched by some one; and it is easier for one person to escape observation than two: for," she added earnestly, "I would not

for worlds be the means of bringing danger to any of your interesting family."

"We trust you as we trust the Holy One," said the gentleman, reverently bowing as he spoke. "The soul is worthy of its tenement. Both speak one language—the language of truth and loyalty to the highest ideals."

"I am afraid, Mr. Adolph, you judge me too favorably. You have not seen the other side of my character. I am fearful you would think my ideals were not so very high, if you saw me in one of my impatient fits sometimes."

"An impatience, no doubt, justifiable in its way. One cannot pretend to be satisfied with everything in this world. Some things are wrong, and out of joint; and why should not one say so—not petulantly, but simply?"

She stroked Gyp's glossy neck for a minute or two without speaking, as if half afraid to commit herself, and then said, looking at him almost doubtfully: "Yes, but do you not think that a wider experience, a deeper knowledge of life precludes the possibility of impatience in any form? Are not fretfulness and discontent really a sign of undevelopment?" His look and mien expressed such full assent, that she continued: "I have thought much since of what your father said regarding the repeated births into this world, and it seems to solve many a problem for me. I am afraid I must be born many times yet on this planet before I reach the intellectual and spiritual condition fit for a higher life. Do you really think that ordinary or inferior people can be thus developed to the lofty heights reached by the master souls of the race?"

He listened eagerly, as if drinking in her words, and at once spoke as she looked at him inquiringly: "I think that is possible; and in no other way can one truly have a chance for wide development—that is, such development as this world can give. And surely every child born here is entitled to the best training and growth which his mother

earth can give and of which he is susceptible. Surely, in the economy of God, this earth must have a special place in the education of each individual of the human family, and perhaps no other world can exactly take the place of ours in giving us this training and development, and so we must return here by successive incarnations until we have reached this point of mental and spiritual growth."

"Do many of your—I mean of the Order, believe as you and your father on this point?"

"Not many, but yet it is steadily gaining ground. Entering the order is the first step in throwing aside the puerile beliefs and superstitions of the orthodox Russian Church, and when once men and women begin to think on these matters, there is hope for them. The trouble is, religious beliefs among all peoples are handed down from generation to generation—much as property is, and the majority never think of looking into and examining the groundwork of the creeds and confessions they recite so glibly."

They had been so interested in their conversation that they had allowed their steeds to walk as they listed, and now found themselves at the "Big Ravine," and a glance at her watch showed Elsie that unless she rode with unusual speed she would be very late for breakfast, and so the horses were turned homeward at a galloping pace.

"Why, Elsie, my child, where have you been? We have been waiting breakfast these twenty minutes, and here is a letter from Australia in answer to the one I wrote regarding Esmond," exclaimed Mr. Hastings, as the young lady, flushed with her unusually rapid ride, leaped from the saddle and ran up the front steps.

"Take care of him, John, he is very warm," she called out, as the man led away Gyp. "Oh, father, I have had such a delightful ride, but it is too bad about breakfast. I will be ready in five minutes or less," and she ran to her

room, but returning in an instant called back: "But, father, is the news good, from Australia?"

"Yes, yes. Quite good. Now get ready for breakfast and don't keep our guests waiting any longer," and again she vanished.

"Nice doings, indeed, Miss Madcap, riding about the country in this wild fashion. Well, I declare! Are all your countrywomen as independent in these matters as you are, Miss Elsie?" asked the Englishman as they assembled at breakfast a few moments later.

"I must ask father to answer that question," she laughingly replied. "I think he has always given me a pretty free rein."

"My daughter has generally followed her own bent in such matters," Mr. Hastings said, smiling. "She has never worshipped at Madam Grundy's shrine, and has been governed largely by her own instincts. But she is an exception, I fear, rather than the rule, in comparing her habits and life with those of her young countrywomen."

"So I should suppose, judging by those I have seen so far. A good, strong physique is, I rather imagine, much less common here among young ladies than with us."

"One thing I am persuaded of," said the host; "that the solution of the problem of the equality of the sexes, which is exciting so much attention nowadays, lies in this matter of physical vigor. If woman can bring herself to equal health with her competitor man—not necessarily equal strength, but that condition of bodily endurance which will enable her to meet the various demands made upon her in the struggle of life, without loss of health and life-long invalidism, as we see so often now after a few years of effort—then, and not until then, can she successfully compete with him, hand to hand and shoulder to shoulder."

"Half the world will probably agree with you, uncle,"

said Seaman; "but I doubt very much if the other and most interested half will."

"Not most interested, Warren; for we are just as much interested in this matter as they are, for the hope of the race lies with the women. But if they wish to carry successfully the same burdens that we do, they must lay aside the self-imposed other burdens which at present are so largely sapping their vitality. Look at the facts. Boys are encouraged to exercise and develop their bodily powers in every way. They are dressed in loose-fitting garbs which do not restrain the full use of lungs or limbs, but leave them free and untrammelled to run, jump, or otherwise exercise any or all of the five hundred or so muscles of their wonderfully constructed bodies. Then look at the poor girls —the girdles, and the cinctures, and the corsets, and the high-heeled shoes with narrow soles, and the other abominable contrivances for checkmating nature which go to make up the girl's dress of the period. And, 'Remember, you are a young lady,' is perpetually being sounded in her ears, until the desired effect is produced. Crippled feet, mincing slow step, feeble muscles, pale complexion and a languid air—the whole enshrined in an atmosphere of 'perfect propriety.'"

"Oh, Mr. Hastings, what a picture of our poor sex," exclaimed Louisa, "and I must protest that it is too highly colored—a libel. Why, I never wore a high-heeled shoe in my life, nor sister either—did we, Ellen?"

The bride-elect blushed at this direct appeal, and hesitated as she answered: "Well, only at parties sometimes, and on Sundays, I think."

"Why, you little simpleton, do you call those shoes high, not more than an inch and a half, I am sure?"

The confession and resulting remark proved too much for the risibilities of the others, and a general laugh ensued.

"Trust Ellen for bringing the ghosts out of the closets,"

said the Englishman, heartily; "only a question of opinion, Mr. Hastings, you see."

"I am ready to own, Miss Louisa, that young Englishwomen have a great advantage over our girls in the matter of dress and exercise, and, perhaps, dieting, but even they are placed at a great disadvantage beside their brothers in these matters. What I do claim is, that the average woman, when the responsibilities of life begin to press upon her, finds herself shorn of one-half of her natural physical power by the unnatural course of training she has been put through, and so must draw upon her reserve nervous force if she attempts to accomplish as much work, of almost any kind, as her male competitors. And, remember, these habits of girlhood are a second nature and will not be materially changed in womanhood, but rather emphasized, for now she will largely give up proper exercise in consequence of the exhaustion she will experience, and so a gradual giving way of the nervous system, and a premature decay, is only a matter of time. This, to my mind, is the woman question! Woman must change her physical habits as regards dress, exercise, etc., and then there is no reason why she cannot compete successfully with her brothers in any department, almost, of legitimate labor. Let her carry no burdens which nature does not impose, and she may even outstrip man in the race, hindered and hampered as he is by some vile habits which he has acquired and which are continually thwarting his best efforts, such as the use of tobacco and alcohol."

"Well, I am glad that the lords of creation have some failings too, just to equalize matters a little. I think a certain gentleman at the table may apply those last remarks to himself," said Louisa, glancing mischievously at her father, who answered, good-humoredly:

"I understand you, Miss Saucebox. I must plead guilty, Mr. Hastings, to a fondness for a good glass of punch, and

a pipe after dinner; and these girls will give me a sly touch about it now and then. These things are so common with us that we rarely give them a thought. Over here, however, they seem to occupy a good deal of attention."

"But do you not think, Mr. Thompson, that the prevalence of the drinking habit and the carelessness exhibited with reference to it on the part of those who know better is a fruitful cause of the abject poverty, and crime, and misery, which abound in the crowded centres of Great Britain?" asked the host.

"Very possible; but constant use dims our vision to such matters, I suppose. I frankly concede, though, that your country leads the van on the temperance question. But I am afraid I am too old to change my habits now; yet I think if I was beginning life again I would not touch alcohol or tobacco."

Ellen looked up with a smile of sympathy at her father as he finished speaking, for she knew how costly these habits had been to him in one way and another. The memory of a loved brother, saved as by fire, from a drunkard's grave, to whose brink he had been dragged by these twin agents of physical ruin, rose up before her and told her what lay behind and prompted her father's words. Seaman knew of the circumstance, although he had not met the young man, who was at present in Jamaica, and instinctively surmised what was in her mind; and, divining that the subject must be a painful one for their guests, he hastened to change it by asking his uncle what had become of his cousin Esmond and how it was that he had not been to see them lately.

"I can hardly explain that, for he has no special business that I know of, and yet he is always in a hurry and seems to have a great deal to do," said his uncle, with just a shade of annoyance in his face, when the name of the erratic nephew was mentioned. "However, Elsie," he continued,

after a moment's pause, "suppose you ask Harry to dinner to-morrow to meet our friends and his cousin Warren."

"I think that will be so nice, father, and I will write to him to-day," she answered, in a gratified way, as this concession on her father's part convinced her that the news from Australia had been favorable to the young man.

The letter was not from the gentleman written to, for it seemed he was away from home on a two months' trip, but from his private secretary, who had been instructed to open all correspondence, and attend to it as required. The writer, Mr. Merton, said he could answer the queries regarding Mr. Esmond as well as his employer, as the young gentleman was well known to the firm.

We consider him a very bright, capable, conscientious young man, and one who is popular in society. He has, indeed, remarkable winning ways, and his absence is regretted by many here. He has great self-reliance, and will go alone on a smaller hand than any other man I ever saw. I can truly say that I never heard a doubt expressed as to his moral standing.

Any further information will be cheerfully given at any time by Mr. Wheat or myself.

Very respectfully yours,

JAS. H. MERTON.

To say that the uncle was quite satisfied with regard to the nephew's past life would not be true, but he felt that it would be at least ungracious to show suspicion any longer, especially as he had by implication promised to be governed by these letters; and so he requested Elsie to invite Esmond to dine with them, which he knew would be considered by that gentleman as a sign that the hatchet was buried, for the present at any rate.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### WEDDING BELLS.

"Cousin Harry, let me introduce you to another cousin, of whom you have often heard me speak—Dr. Seaman."

"Mr. Harry Esmond! And right glad I am to meet you and know you," said the doctor, coming forward and frankly holding out his hand.

Esmond responded, but with much less warmth, which surprised Elsie, as she knew the young Australian was usually quite effusive in his style of approaching others. What was the matter with these newly acquainted relations, for no sooner did their hands touch, and they looked each other full in the face than there seemed to be a mutual recoil, or rather the recoil was on the part of the physician largely, for Esmond was much the more self-possessed of the pair? The face of the former expressed unbounded astonishment, while observable on the latter's countenance was simple dislike thinly veiled with that covert sneer which Elsie had frequently seen there before when something annoyed him excessively.

"Why, Cousin Seaman, what is the matter?" exclaimed he, recovering his usual manner at once. "If you were not a medicine man yourself, I should say you needed the help of one, to judge by your pale cheeks. Cheer up, man. You evidently saw a ghost of the past in my face, and were scared. Not the first case of mistaken identity you've had, I'll bet something."

This was said in such a tone of pleasant banter that Warren at once by an effort shook off the unpleasant feel-

ing excited by his new cousin's face, and answered cheerfully: "Well, you did remind me of somebody, I confess. These likenesses are remarkable, though I hope you will excuse my yielding so foolishly to a sudden impression." So saying, the young man shook hands heartily, to Elsie's great satisfaction, though she could not altogether free her mind from an unpleasant feeling, when she remembered Esmond's conduct of a few days before on first seeing Warren at a distance.

"Had these two met before under unpleasant circumstances?" would keep coming into her mind in a questioning way all through the dinner hour.

Esmond soon made himself at home with the English guests, and led Louisa Thompson in to dinner, and judging from the continual banter and raillery carried on between them they seemed to be kindred spirits; in fact, it was easy to see that the cousin from the Antipodes was in excellent humor, and acted as a man who had just triumphed over some serious obstacle. Only once did he seem to lose his gay, easy manner, Seaman noticed; and somehow the physician found himself involuntarily watching him, and glancing in the direction from which the depressing influence had seemingly come, saw the little black eyes of the Frenchwoman gazing at the Australian in a peculiarly sinister manner. So vindictive was the look of the housekeeper, and so mocking was the half smile on her face as she furtively watched him, while apparently engaged in directing the servants, that Seaman was really startled, and something of the old feeling returned which he had experienced on meeting Esmond at first.

"Can it be that this bold cousin of mine has a past which calls for vengeance, for assuredly, that is Nemesis before me?" he said to himself, and would like to have said so to Ellen, could he have done it without attracting the attention of the others.

Seaman had arrived at that point in his love experience in which no thought seemed worth having, or thing either, unless he could share it with her who, indeed, he now felt was his other self. But although this impulse to draw his companion's attention to the housekeeper was almost uncontrollable, yet a moment later he rejoiced he had not done so, for he suddenly remembered what had entirely escaped him before, that this was his cousin, one of his own blood, over whom it was his duty to throw the ægis of kinship, even if he were deserving of the repugnance which he felt toward him.

Whatever Dr. Seaman thought of his new cousin, it was soon evident that the young man had contrived to win a high place for himself in the estimation of the young ladies, for Louisa whispered to Elsie, as they left the dining-room, "What a charming man your cousin is, Elsie; he seems to have been everywhere, and know almost everything." And Ellen, even, said that she thought he was "a very nice, gentlemanly fellow, with no nonsense about him."

"A letter for Mr. Esmond, miss," said the girl, entering the drawing-room after dinner, as the different members of the party were variously amusing themselves. "Mr. Richards, of the Sinclair House, sent it up, and Mrs. Wagram told me to bring it up at once, as it might be of importance."

Esmond's quick ear heard his name mentioned, and excusing himself hastily to the three young ladies whom he had been entertaining on the veranda with a graphic account of some humorous adventure, leaped through the large open window and almost snatched the epistle from the girl.

"Who do you say sent this letter to me?" he asked, after nervously glancing at the printed name on the corner of the envelope.

"Mrs. Wagram, sir," replied the servant, timidly, somewhat abashed by his abrupt manner.

"Dam" was the only syllable of a word, the balance of which, body and tail, seemed to be swallowed in an internal volcano of smothered indignation, which caught the ears of Dr. Seaman on his way through the hall to reach the party outside. The gentleman paused a moment in doubt and surprise, as the girl who had brought the note flitted past him on her return, and then the words, "so that she-devil saw it, did she?" uttered in a low tone of concentrated bitterness, reached him through the open door. The physician had purposed entering the drawing-room, and joining the group outside by passing through the window by which Esmond had entered. Now, however, he changed his mind, and hastily and noiselessly retracing his steps he passed out by the front door, and reached the veranda that way.

"Did you find the book, Dr. Seaman?" said Louisa.

"Yes, and I see you are right; I quoted the wrong author."

"Bear witness all, that this learned lord of creation, M.D., etc., has confessed for once that he is in the wrong;" and then she added, "I must tell Mr. Esmond."

"I shall be delighted to hear," said that young gentleman, coming through the window of the parlor at that moment, rejoining the party with a face in which smiles seemed to be struggling to drive away the scattered remnants of frowns. Seaman regarded him with a curiosity not unmixed with admiration; for his trained eye saw the traces yet lingering of a fierce internal conflict.

"What tremendous self-control that fellow has," he thought. "He is full of passion, and naturally as impetuous and uncertain as gunpowder; but he has a wonderful mastery of himself. He has studied in some strange school."

The girl who had brought the note to the young man returned at once to the housekeeper's room, where she found that lady nervously awaiting her.

"Well, what did mi lord say?" she queried, her black orbs snapping fiercely.

"I gave him your message, madam, and he asked, 'Who did you say sent it?' and he just scared me, he did, he looked so fierce-like. And then I told him again, and as I left the room I heard him say something bad."

"Let me hear what he said—I insist, Maggie;" and the "foreign lady," as the servants called her, looked so peremptory that Maggie yielded at once, and almost before she knew it blurted out:

"He said 'dam,' madam—I mean, he just said 'dam.'"

The housekeeper laughed heartily, as she walked up and down the room, working her hands nervously.

"That was all? Well, you can go. Don't mention this to anybody—mind, nobody—nothing about it, and I won't forget you, Maggie. Ma bonté, won't le béte look one of these days. I'll teach him one lesson. Ha, ha, madam no account? Ma foi," she said, as Maggie left the room, after promising to be as silent as the grave.

The wedding morning! and everybody and everything astir bright and early. The ceremony was to take place at the Hermitage, and by the Episcopal minister of Melville. This was in accordance with the wishes of the bride, as the Thompson family were members of the "Establishment," although the Englishman privately admitted to his host that personally he did not accept the doctrines of the Church. "But," he remarked smiling, "it is the church of the crown; and, as a loyal subject, of course I must be a member of the church of the crown, and then, too, it is the most respectable, you know, Mr. Hastings."

"But, surely, you cannot find much satisfaction in belonging to a church or religious organization which you do not heartily believe in," said the other, in astonishment.

"Yes, yes, I can. Why, my dear sir, the majority of

thinking Englishmen to-day simply regard the national church institution as a very respectable antiquity—much as we look at Westminster Abbey, or the famous cathedrals of our country. Spiritually, it is almost defunct; but, as a venerable and interesting relic of the past, it is a very fine thing, and we would grieve heartily if anything should happen to it." And the jovial Briton twirled his watch-keys and seals, as he walked up and down the room, with such a humorous, philosophical air that his companion could not help smiling, as he replied:

"Then I am to understand that the average Englishman of the higher and middle classes to-day cares little or nothing about the Church, as an aid to worship or spiritual development, and would vote for its continuance just as a part of that vast system of machinery by which the British empire is governed?"

"Precisely," returned the other. "Call it a police institution, if you like it any better; for that is largely its function."

"Persuasion, then, loyalty to an establishment, traditional feeling, deep-rooted opposition to change and, especially among the lower classes, self-interest—constitute, with the natural religious feelings, what the Church of England depends and relies on to-day to maintain its ascendency in your country?" queried Mr. Hastings.

"Right again; and I am somewhat surprised that you, an American, can grasp the position so clearly. The Church means spiritually very little to the masses of England. The truest religious expression is to be found among the dissenters, who, however, hitherto, and in a large degree even to-day, have had to pay for their defection and disloyalty—for it is so regarded by the church party—by loss of caste and social standing. The truth is, the clergy have usually talked over the heads of the mass of the people, even supposing it was possible to interest them in a system of theology

which was utterly at variance with their experience and common sense."

"I agree with you there, Mr. Thompson; for I recollect talking with one of your Thames boatmen on these matters one day, and I asked him, among other things, if he attended church? 'In course I does. Yer doan't think I'm a Methoday, do yer, sir? Noa, I belong to the Church. Been attending most long as I remember.' 'Well,' I said, being somewhat curious to find out the spiritual standing of these people, 'then no doubt you learn a great many good things at church. Can you tell me something about the service last Sunday? I suppose you were there?' 'Yes,' he answered, 'in course I was there, and the wife, too; and parson he did the sarvice, and pretty long it is, too, and then a stranger chap he coome in the pulpit with his black gown on, an' he preached, an' he preached, and said summat about doing yer dooty, an' I says to Betsy, pretty hard to ask a feller to do his duty on ten shillin' a week, an' he got a family to support. I wonder what he means by dooty, anyhow?' And, on closer questioning, I found out that although this man had been attending this church since childhood, yet he had never had any clear idea of what it all meant; and the outcome of all this church instruction was—that there was an old man somewhere in the sky, who would look after one, and make it all right some day."

"A very fair sample of the peasant thought in relation to national church teaching and theology. Too many of the people attend church from interested motives—such as to gain favor with their superiors, and because it is considered respectable," rejoined the Briton.

This conversation had taken place in the library, while the bride was being "decked for the sacrifice," as Louisa put it—the wedding was to take place at noon precisely.

No pen could do justice to the lovely bride in her snowy toilet, surmounted by that exquisite veil—the gift of Mr.

Hastings. The two bridesmaids, only less radiant than the queen of the occasion, looked charming in their white robes; and a most exquisite tiara of white roses, freshly gathered, was worn by each in lieu of a more elaborate head-dress. Dr. Seaman looked a little impatient as the rather lengthy but solemn and imposing service of the Anglican Church Americanized was in progress, and was, perhaps, a trifle nervous, although he vigorously disclaimed this charge when so accused by the bridesmaids, Elsie and Louisa, after the ceremony.

"Of course I realized the responsibility of the occasion, and the fact that I was giving away my liberty," he said; "but I was as cool as a cucumber, and always gave the responses in the right place, which is more than either of you bridesmaids will be able to do, when your turn comes, I'll wager something."

"Why, I know it all off by heart now," returned Louisa.

"So I suppose," he answered quickly—"don't doubt it in the least. Thought you'd be ready for emergency, eh? Thanks for your frank confession. It gives me some idea now of how some young ladies employ their spare time. I'll take a note of that"—at the same time taking out his note-book, and pretending to make an entry.

Louisa looked annoyed, and actually colored, as she retorted:

"It's no such thing. I know it as a matter of general information, having heard it so often. But it was really refreshing to see a sceptic like you caught in the meshes of the church at last, and obliged to acknowledge the authority of the Prayer Book. Didn't he look humble and penitent, Elsie?"

"Yes, you did, Warren; and it was so becoming to you, that I hope you will continue so."

"Humble and penitent! Well, really, Ellen, on your honor, did you think I looked either humble or penitent?"

pleaded the groom demurely, turning with a comically appealing look to his wife.

"Oh, pray don't ask her," called out Louisa. "She was too much occupied in thinking what she had to say next; and any spare time she had was given to wondering if her veil hung quite straight."

"What a fib, Lou!" said the bride. "Why, I never thought about the veil once!" and this was uttered so earnestly that all the others laughed in concert.

Warren, however, covered his bride's retreat by adding: "No, indeed, Ellen dear, you had something better to think of; and for myself, if I looked humble, it was no wonder in the presence of such regal-looking bridesmaids, wearing crowns; and as for the penitence, of course I was penitent for my sins of omission in not having used the privilege of the last minutes of my bachelorhood in fraternally kissing the bridesmaids, which I believe is always customary. But with your permission, I'll make amends now."

Instant retreat on the part of the young ladies alone saved them the threatened punishment; and at this moment Mr. Hastings appeared, to lead the way into the dining-room, where they found a beautifully decorated table, while Mrs. Wagram, whose work this was, stood smilingly by, as the guests entered, many of whom audibly expressed their admiration of her attractive handiwork. The room was festooned and trimmed like an arbor, and over the centre of the table hung a superb floral crown. By an ingenious device, several fountains of colored water threw their spray together with a beautiful blending of colors over a handsome fretted glass bell, immediately under the crown, beneath which rested the chef-d'œuvre of the occasion, the bridal cake. Fruit and flowers and those wonderful little nicknacks, which certain artistic fingers so excel in making, were in profusion. The table was largely a feast for the eye, as the substantial viands were served from side-boards.

"I wish our Cave-friends could have been here," whispered Elsie to her father, as she entered the room. He smiled, as he answered :

"I wish so, too, my child, if it would have pleased you."

Esmond had been invited, but sent a polite note of excuse—having a "prior engagement," he said.

The usual speeches and good wishes followed the luncheon—Mr. Thompson congratulating the happy man on having secured one patient, at least, to begin practice with.

"But how about the saying," asked Louisa, "that doctors' wives are always sick, and shoemakers' always barefooted ?"

"I know one doctor's wife that doesn't mean to be sick," answered Warren—"not if she takes her husband's advice, whether she takes his medicine or not," fondly looking at the fair girl beside him.

"Don't you let him experiment on you with undeveloped mixtures and new drugs, cousin Ellen," said Elsie.

"At least, not until he has taken it first himself ; and, if you do that, you'll never take any medicine, I'll engage," added Louisa. But James came to announce the carriage, and in a few moments more the happy couple were on their way to the train en route for Niagara, where Ellen preferred to spend the two weeks of absence which they allowed themselves.

"Now, father," she had said tearfully, on parting with her parent—and in spite of the brave faces both felt it intensely—"you will tell mother how dreadfully I feel at letting you go home without me, but somehow I couldn't help it ;" and here she broke down completely, and had to be hurried into the carriage by Seaman, who felt almost like a criminal at having been the cause of so much suffering to these three. Louisa was much affected, but not so much as her father and sister ; for she was resolved to revisit America, and did not regard the distance as such a serious obstacle ; besides she was of a much stronger nature than Ellen, and more self-reliant.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE "GREAT BOOTY" MINE.

"Now, St. Johns, it's no use being down-cast. 'It's a long lane,' you know, and I tell you that you shall have her. What if she did refuse you once, or ten times, for that matter? I've got something to say in the matter; and I think I understand woman's nature as well as the next fellow, I don't care who he is. But you can let me have that thousand I won from you, can't you? I want it this week, badly?"

Roland seemed to shrink back at these last words, and a look of distress passed over his face, as he slowly answered: "I hardly know, but I'll try. Mother asks curious questions now, and wonders when the dividends are coming. It can't go on much longer, I'm afraid; and if father ever finds out how this money has gone, it's all over with me. I must leave home forever."

"Tut-tut, man! The governor's got plenty of shiners. He can stand bleeding a while longer; and when you are the happy master of the Hermitage, you can flip your fingers at the world."

"But couldn't you let this money matter run a little longer? Why, Esmond," he gasped, taking out his pocket account-book, and running his eye over some entries—"why, I have had over four thousand dollars from mother already. I dare not ask for any more just yet. Won't those fellows wait?"

"Pooh-pooh, man, don't show the white feather in this

way. What is four, or even ten thousand dollars? Why, I often won and lost that in a single evening. All it wants is nerve. You think too much of small sums of money. Nothing shows a man's greenness like that. You lost the money to me, and I lost it to Jenkins; and he says he must have the tin, and so I have to push you for it, and you must push the old lady. Just boost her up on the mine, can't you? Tell her we shall take out ten thousand a week, after the new machinery gets in, and the water is all out. Here are some circulars, which you can show her. What do you think of that?" And the speaker took a printed circular from a roll of others, and held it before his companion, and while holding read, in a dramatic style, as follows:

OFFICE OF THE "GREAT BOOTY" MINE.
YEPSING, TEUTON COUNTY, NEVADA DISTRICT,
August 17, 18—.

*To the President and Directors.*

GENTLEMEN: I have the honor to present to you the report herewith of the committee of investigation appointed by you at your last monthly meeting. As you will see by the report, the committee, by personal investigation continued through many days, determined that the "Great Booty" is the richest mine by far on the ridge—that there are millions now in plain sight, and that the unseen wealth is probably inexhaustible. They see no good reason why ten millions should not be taken out this year.

J. H. ROE, *Secretary.*

Esmond read this with a great deal of flourish and emphasis, at the same time frequently glancing at his companion to note the effect. He then handed him the printed report, signed by the committee.

"No need for my reading that; but you can show it to your mother, you know."

When Mrs. St. Johns, yielding to the solicitations of her son, agreed to buy shares of stock in the Australian mine, she had little idea of the cabalistic word "assessments." But at the period at which the conversation just narrated

took place, the good lady could have given a voluble explanation of the word, with a large series of marginal references, in the shape of refined expletives couched, of course, in her favorite French. She had been steadily drained of all her surplus cash, as well as that of her daughters', in addition to all she could cajole, borrow, or beg from her husband on any pretense whatsoever. But the rainbow of hope ever arched the heavens of her expectancy, and the promised pot of gold was ready for the finder. Yet when a letter from her son reached her, inclosing the report and secretary's letter, of which we give an extract above, and urging that she send at once $1,000, she felt and looked really ill, and retired to her own room to re-read the letter, doubtful if she really understood the contents. The report and official communication she had not yet looked at.

"What does the child mean? A thousand dollars more? Why, he told me, I am positive, the last time I paid an assessment that it would probably be the final one." And then she again read the epistle, and noted the stress put on the inclosed report by the writer.

"Why, mother, just think of ten millions! And what are a few thousands in the shape of assessments, compared with that? You will be independent for life, and can live like a queen."

Eagerly, indeed, she devoured the golden words of the secretary, and then the more formal return of the committee of mining experts—for so they were designated—each of them having hieroglyphics after their names, for the mystic letters meant little more to her eyes, showing their wonderful and rare scientific attainments.

"Ten millions," she repeated to herself, and presently the room seemed to expand into a palace, and the very air took on a golden hue—an auriferous vision, in which she beheld a royal lady, arrayed in the richest products of far-famed India's looms; a figure before whom her hitherto

highest conception of even Oriental magnificence paled and dwindled into insignificance ; an army of devoted and praise-breathing courtiers, only less splendidly attired, pressing forward to win her favor or smile. The atmosphere seemed redolent of the incense of delicate flattery. Ten millions ! Those magic words ! For awhile she resigned herself to this delicious and gorgeous entrancement, this golden reverie, until a dark cloud came between her and the beauteous scene ; and on this cloud appeared inscribed, in plain, unmistakable characters, $1,000. She shuddered, and tried to bring back the lovely scene which had been obscured, but in vain ; only other clouds appeared, on which she could read $500 and $1,500 and $700, and a number of dwarf-clouds, having $50 or $100 marked on them. The poor lady was fain to awake to reality, and by opening her eyes get rid of these nubiform ghosts with financial breast-plates. Something must be done ; but what should that something be ? "I must refuse any more money. Indeed, I have not got $50, and dare not ask Ruskin for it." But the report and the vision ! She wrung her hands, and actually shed tears. Suddenly, a thought came—"my diamond cross." Rushing to her dressing-case, she opened a secret drawer, and lifted with trembling fingers a beautiful cross, sparkling with brilliants, attached to a gold chain. It was a superb thing —a triumph of the jeweller's art. Gazing on it, the lady's eyes filled with tears, and she pressed her lips to the trinket. Hardly conscious of the act, she adjusted the chain round her neck, looked in the mirror for a second to note the effect, and again took her seat, and re-read the report. "Oh, what shall I do ?" said the poor woman, agonizingly. "Ruskin never would forgive me, if I parted with it—my wedding gift !"

The cross had been given on the tenth anniversary of their wedding, in ratification of a promise made by Mr. St.

Johns that he would give his wife a diamond cross, for which she had frequently expressed an ardent desire, on the receipt of his first $5,000 fee. Being successful in winning an important case for a wealthy manufacturing firm, involving over $200,000, and finding himself richer in consequence by some $8,000, he fulfilled his promise by presenting a $2,000 diamond cross to his wife, on the next anniversary of their wedding. Her almost childish joy on receiving this valuable gift was so great, and her gratitude so unbounded, that the lawyer felt almost compensated for having "made a fool of himself," as he expressed it to a friend, "in laying out such a large sum of money for a bauble."

"I only ask you, my dear," he said to her, "that you will never part with it without my knowledge, and will wear it at our wedding anniversaries and the birthdays of the children."

"No, no, I never can let it go! The money must be raised in some other way. I never could look Ruskin in the face again, if I parted with it."

But the desire for present gratification is generally stronger than the fear of remote penalty for wrong-doing. The jewel was taken to a money-lender, who was accustomed to accommodate ladies in financial straits; and, understanding the situation at once, M. Le Clerk suavely insinuated that madam could easily have an imitation cross made for about fifty dollars, which would cover the transaction completely, and no one would be a bit wiser.

"I assure you, madam, when I did go in business in Paris, les grande dames did leave their jewellery with me most of the time. Even ze court ladies with ze empress, and ze empress herself, wear ze imitation, and nobody know. I will give you $1,000 for ze cross."

After some bargaining, the broker agreed to give $1,200 —the owner to have the privilege of redeeming the jewel

within a year, on payment of the money with thirty per cent. interest, and a bonus of $100 for the accommodation.

Roland received the check for $1,000, secretly wondering how his mother had been able to raise it on such short notice; and he felt like a criminal, when he read the words in the letter: "Now, my dear boy, see that this money is properly applied; you don't know what it has cost me, but it must be the last. Your mother believes in you as she does in her own life, and would make any sacrifice for you; but I can raise no more money. The Mine must begin to declare dividends now. Don't you think so yourself?"

"My mother is the best friend I ever had; and I feel as if I was acting like a devil toward her!" he said passionately to Esmond, on handing him the check. "Esmond, is there anything—now, be honest with me—is there anything in that mine?"

"Plenty in it, my dear fellow—plenty in it. The only trouble is in getting it out. But say, you have done well. I'm proud of you; but what's wrong? Did the old lady kick badly this time?"

"Proud of me, when I feel like as if I ought to be cowhided! But nothing seems to move you."

"Come, now—no dumps. Didn't I tell you that everything is booming, and that you will be master of the Hermitage before you know it. But if you're going to show the white feather—well, good-by."

"I don't want to show the 'white feather,' as you call it: but this thing can't go on for ever; and Elsie, as you know, avoids me. I don't see any hope in that direction."

"St. Johns, just leave me to manage this matter. This check is all right" (putting it in his vest-pocket); "and now let us to other business. I have something to tell you."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### SOLVING PROBLEMS.

"My dear child, I have been thinking of you and your father much lately. I grieve to know of the trouble which threatens you. Adolph informed me that you wished to speak with me, and I am so glad you have come to-day."

So saying, the Patriarch led his guest to a soft fox-skin settee, and then took a seat opposite her.

She fancied that the venerable form seemed somewhat more feeble since her last visit, and to rest more heavily on the cane than usual; but there was the same mild, genial face, with its wealth of fleecy beard and silver locks, and the same quiet dignity of presence as heretofore.

"My son has put me in possession of the main facts of the case; so I will not trouble you by a repetition, but content myself by asking a few questions."

Elsie's answers to the questions of the Patriarch soon put him in possession of the facts of the case, so far as she herself knew them. One or two points she could not speak of with certainty, and promised to obtain the information, and send to the Exile as speedily as possible.

"I feel sure that help will come to you in this emergency, my daughter, and perhaps from unlooked-for sources. I am a very old man, and have had some peculiar experiences, especially in my early life, of plots and plans for fraudulent purposes, and I feel satisfied that this is a conspiracy; and you may rest content that any aid I can afford will be most cheerfully given."

"Oh, thank you! Your words give me courage. Somehow, I think you can help us. I cannot tell why, but I feel it."

He looked at her quietly for a moment or two, with those penetrating eyes, and then smiling, said, taking her hand in his:

"Tell me, my child, would it distress you so very much if your father lost this property? Even if it made you poor, do you really fear poverty?"

He seemed almost anxiously to await her answer.

Flushing as if something had been insinuated which clashed with her higher instincts, she responded eagerly, half rising, unconsciously, from her seat as she did so:

"Oh, father!"—he had asked her to call him father—"can you think that I value property merely for itself, or fear poverty for myself? No, no; but it would sadden my dear parent's remaining years if he were obliged to leave the Hermitage—and then, too," she added, her voice quivering in spite of herself, "it is my childhood's home, with which all that is best in my past life is associated. I do not fear poverty, and often wish that a way could be opened up so that I could help bear my full share of the great burden of existence which seems to weigh so heavily on many of my fellow-creatures."

Her answer seemed to please, for he smiled fondly on her, answering slowly, as if thinking over her words:

"With a nature like yours, my daughter, such desire means performance. All duties lie not in the same channel of life. You are doing your work, and a way will open up yet for a larger work if you still cherish this desire and remain in this spirit."

"Thank you, so much; but I sometimes fear I shall never find my true, that is, my highest work, where all my powers shall be employed in advancing some grand cause which enlists my whole nature and sympathies—conscience, heart,

judgment, all—which will bring into action the very best that is in me, that I am capable of."

"You will find such work, my child; but it may not take such shape that you will recognize it when it comes. But yet it will possibly seem partly familiar, too, as being work attempted or begun before you entered this stage of your being."

She looked at the aged face inquiringly, and then, at once grasping his thought, said, eagerly: "You mean in the previous life, before I was born into this present. I have thought much of what you said about that. It is quite new to me; but somehow it does seem sometimes as if it might be true. But I cannot understand about memory. We would remember something, surely, if we had had an intelligent life before this. Besides, if some are born repeatedly into this human state, as I understood Mr. Adolph to say was your opinion, then what becomes of the past life at each change?"

"I am aware of the difficulty which seems to lie here; but it is, believe me, more apparent than real. We do remember, only memory takes the form of quicker understanding, larger intelligence. Is the wise man, the savant of to-day, the man who remembers best the petty items of his early training, of his youthful studies, or the details of his college life, or even the academic lore? No; it is the one who, perhaps, almost forgetting those lessons in their peculiar and individual relation to his education, yet has gained from them mental strength, power of sustained thought, clearness of intellectual processes, and a mental and spiritual tone which gives him supremacy wherever the higher nature dominates the lower. The intellectual giants, as Shakespeare, Humboldt, Newton, Goethe, etc., are, I believe, the minds which have been gradually developed from mediocrity to the altitude attained by them, in this very way—that is, by passing through the discipline of this life

many times. But I see you want to ask a question ; speak freely, my child. It is only by seeking knowledge that we can hope to find it."

Elsie had been listening intently, and was rather startled at the last remark, as showing a perception of her thought by her companion which she could not understand.

"I would like to ask a question—but how could you tell that?" she asked, almost nervously.

"I saw it in your mind, my daughter. Be not alarmed. I am no necromancer, or wizard. You can attain this power, too, and one day in the fast-coming future it will, I believe, be the common property of the race. But I will tell you what your question was, though as yet unshaped in words, and then proceed to answer it. It was, Why, if the being, as said before, until he reaches the life of man, has not arrived at the memory-point, should not one who is entering upon a second or third stage of this human existence have at least a partial memory of the previous stage or stages passed through in human form? Am I right?"

Wondering, almost with superstitious awe, she looked at him as he concluded, and answered : "Yes ; that was exactly the thought which would keep coming up in my mind while you were speaking—does he know he lived before?"

"He does know it, but how? To partly repeat then, memory of a thing is knowledge of that thing, and that memory will be in exact proportion to the knowledge. But it is rarely that we can refer our knowledge to its source, or origin. The educated man has information concerning many things, but he can hardly be expected to tell whence he gleaned that intelligence. It has come to him from a hundred or a thousand sources, and in as many different ways. Yet you cannot deny that, after all, it is memory, although he may fail to inform you as to how he remembers. So Shakespeare or Goethe had what is commonly called intuitive knowledge of many things, which was in reality the

memory of the former earth-life and the intelligence of the things known there. The study, and discipline, and experience of the preceding human life comes to them in the second as a larger intelligence, or appreciation, or understanding of the facts and things presented to them; and this on successively, until we have phenomenal power, genius —Shakespeare, Goethe, Bacon, and in fact all those who rise above their fellows mentally and spiritually."

"Then the greater the intelligence, or talent, or genius, or whatever we may call it, shown by an individual, the oftener we may conclude he has been born into and lived in this world?" asked his hearer. "But if this is true, why should not the supreme spirit have given longer life here, which would have answered the same purpose?"

"Not so, my child; for most of us are bound by circumstances to certain paths of life, and so hampered by conditions that we can only develop in certain channels. So that in order to obtain symmetrical development we must be ushered into life again and again, under different conditions, so as to call out and exercise the latent and hitherto unused powers and capabilities of our complex natures; and so the experience and training goes on until the being has advanced as far as the earth-life can bring him, and is called to a higher and different life. But here comes Adolph, to tell us that the precious time which you can stay with us has almost expired, and so we must close this subject, hoping, if you still feel interested, to continue it on some future occasion."

Nadia and Sophia, who had been down in the ravine when Elsie arrived, now appeared with Adolph, who had been to seek them.

Elsie could not but admire the dexterity and strength which the Russian woman and her daughter exhibited in climbing the rope-ladder leading from the great chasm below to the cave room in which they were. Hearing their

voices, she and the Patriarch had gone to the door or window, whichever it might be called—the mouth of the cave which looked out upon the vast expanse beyond and below, which Elsie used to gaze upon with such quiet enjoyment during her convalescence of a few months before.

"Slava Bogu! Slava Bogu!" shouted the little maiden as she beheld her friend, and bounding toward her, was received with open arms. "How good of you to come again! I have wanted you so much lately," she said, panting between the words with the exertion of running and climbing she had undergone.

"Dear little woman," returned the young lady, fondly stroking the jet-black curls of the young Russian. "I have wanted to see you just as much, and have thought of you often. See what a nice picture I have brought you, to hang in your own room," and Elsie unwrapped a pretty little artistic gem which she had put into a frame of her own making. It represented two children admiring a hutch of pet rabbits, and was really a charming thing in its way.

Uttering an exclamation of delight in her native tongue, the young girl rushed to her mother with the prize, and then returned to kiss the hand of her benefactor.

"How can I thank you? So kind of you to think of me!"

These simple people, with their quiet ways and pleasant manners, always soothed and rested Elsie in a degree that no other society did. She felt that here everything was genuine—real, no make-believe—nothing said or done for effect; she felt thoroughly at home, and as usual, parted from them with reluctance.

The Patriarch in bidding her good-by, said, meaningly: "Now, my daughter, tell your good father not to lose heart about this conspiracy—for such I am confident it is—for something assures me that light will come on the darkness. But if things should seem to be going wrong, don't hesi-

tate to come here. Come promptly, and tell me all about it. Will you promise me this?"

"Willingly," she replied; "you can depend on me, for there is no one I would sooner take counsel with, in an emergency, and I will tell father what you say."

Elsie had left her horse at Hiram's cottage, from whence Adolph had conducted her to the cave. On the return, she rallied him good-humoredly on his unusual quietness.

"Why, Mr. Adolph, if I had not just come from your home, I should fear something was wrong. I do not like to ask if I can in any way be of service, but you know how glad either father or I would be to serve you."

Fearing she had spoken untimely, she paused, glancing at his rather troubled face. But the sound of her voice seemed to help and rouse him from his seeming lethargy, and his old cheerful manner returned at once.

"I am oppressed to-day more than for some time. The truth is, I am feeling more and more how little I have done in my life, and yet I long to do; and, as owned to you once before, feel the surges of a worthy ambition within me. It does seem as if every avenue was walled up. My father's peculiar relations to society, my own limited education and lack of social culture, also the want of a definite occupation. I am depressed at the surroundings and outlook. These feelings used to crop up before, at long intervals; but now, and during the past few months—may I say, since you came like a sunbeam into our shadowy existence—they are with me as a perpetual nightmare."

His voice trembled as he closed, and he turned aside, that she might not see his troubled face. She fully appreciated the condition of this strong nature, full of noble promptings and longings, but hedged in and baffled by untoward circumstances.

"You can and must break these bonds, and escape from the bitter thraldom of circumstances, this despotism of con-

ditions. I so wish you would tell father as frankly as you have spoken to me. I know he could advise you so much better."

"Oh, no, I could not tell anyone but you, and you only can show me the way of escape. We have a superstition in Russia, that the first person seen on awaking in the morning, apart from the family circle, is the lucky one, and can give best counsel. Your entrance into my life broke my ignoble slumbers and roused me to the glorious possibilities of the day. Speak and complete the good work—speak and tell me what I must do with the new day into which your coming has ushered me."

The Russian spoke vehemently and with kindling eyes, from which his very soul seemed to flash. She trembled before his almost fierce impetuosity, and wished in her heart that her wiser parent were present to give the answer to this thoroughly awakened spirit—awakened to life and its claims and responsibilities. But Elsie was strong, and accustomed to decide and think for herself, and although her voice trembled she spoke out bravely.

"Would that I were the lucky one gifted with wise counsel, as your pretty story put it, but alas, I am but a simple country girl, constantly seeking counsel myself. Yet I will try and suggest what seems to me the best thing to do under your peculiar circumstances, and what it occurs to me I should do were I in your place."

"Thank you, that is just what I desire," her hearer responded, gratefully.

"Mr. Adolph, you know you have a great aptitude and ability for natural science, particularly botany and geology. Now, I have heard father often remark that if one would take up in earnest any one of the natural sciences and pursue it perseveringly, he would soon necessarily acquire a liberal education; for these studies are so affiliated with each other that a knowledge of one brings us into contact with

all the others, and so compels information in every direction."

"I understand, but would such a course of study, which I should indeed delight in, give me eventually a definite place and occupation in life?" he asked, eagerly.

"Certainly it would, for father says the world is always ready to welcome the true teacher, the man or woman who knows more on any subject of interest than their fellows; you would write down your knowledge and tell others what treasures you had gained, and share with them."

"But could a man who had not been educated in the schools and colleges write so that the world would read? I fear not," he said, rather despondingly.

"Yes, they would, for in these studies you would be trained and cultured as no college course could do; and then the triumph of knowing that you had reached success by your own unaided efforts;" and she narrated the story of the Scotch quarryman geologist and the peasant botanist, with such effect, that the eyes of her companion fairly glowed, and his form seemed to grow to larger dimensions under the stimulus thus imparted.

"Your kind father promised me books from his library, and perhaps he will tell what others I may require and where I can purchase them."

"Father will be delighted to aid you, and can give you wiser advice than I can. May I tell him the suggestions I have made?"

"Certainly; but I shall follow your guidance, for you are the spirit of the morning to me, remember, the lucky one whose counsel I must follow."

In a moment more she was in the saddle, and as the gentleman handed her the reins and whip, the fervent "thank you, you have lifted the cloud," fell on her ears like a benison to speed her homewards.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE TRIAL.

When Elsie reached home she found her father anxiously awaiting her in the library. He had two things to communicate. One was, that the trial had been fixed for the following Monday, Mr. St. Johns and his associate having visited the Hermitage during her absence, and decided with the proprietor that nothing would be gained by postponement, and in a case of the kind it was generally an advantage to bring matters to a crisis as speedily as possible.

"One reason I have for advising thus," said the lawyer "is, that I have been informed on good authority that the other side have been making strenuous efforts to secure the services of Sharply, of New York, who has a great reputation in cases of this kind, and is remarkably successful in all matters where audacity, shrewdness, and an elastic conscience are necessary. He has wonderful influence with a jury, and is the best cross-examiner I ever heard. He would worry us considerably, especially since we have no *bona fide* deed to show. Now he has at present a big case on hand, and cannot come for this term of court, and so I believe in coming to trial at once, if you are ready and willing."

"I thought St. Johns was most likely right, so next week will probably settle the fate of our home." And Mr. Hastings' voice grew somewhat husky as he uttered these words.

"My dear father, I have no fear of the result. I cannot

believe that my birth-place will go into the hands of strangers, and the Patriarch says that it is a conspiracy, he is sure."

"Undoubtedly, that is the case, but not so easy to prove to the satisfaction of an ignorant jury," returned her parent who manifested more perturbation than she had ever witnessed in him.

"Oh, I must tell you. Mr. Thompson and Louisa sail from New York on Saturday. They are here now, having returned from Toronto this afternoon. Let us not allow this miserable trial business to cast a gloom over the little time they will be with us. We shall see some way out of the woods, no doubt;" and, the ordinary cheerfulness of her beloved parent being again restored, at least externally, Elsie kissed him and retired to dress for dinner.

"It is too bad having to go so soon, but I have come pretty well to the end of my tether, and starting a week earlier than I anticipated will not matter much, besides Lou here is beginning to sigh for merry England. But we have had, indeed, a most delightful trip, and can give glowing accounts of the prosperity of our American cousins."

"But how about Dr. Seaman and Ellen?" asked Mr. Hastings. "Surely you do not leave without seeing them?"

"No, indeed; I dare not face my wife if I did such a thing, and so in accordance with a previous arrangement I telegraphed to them to meet us in New York, where we will spend a couple of days together."

"Surely, Louisa, your father does not mean to leave tomorrow for New York?" demanded Elsie, turning to the young lady.

Louisa nodded her head, saying, "I believe that is his present plan. Can't I persuade you to go back to England with us, I can promise you a most pleasant visit?"

Mr. Hastings looked at his daughter in such an alarmed way at this mere suggestion, that she could not forbear laughing, as she replied :

"Look at my father's face for an answer. Oh, no, I could not take away his housekeeper, besides I am too interested about the trial next week"—she bit her lip regretfully, as she said the words, but it was too late.

"Oh, yes, about the trial, Mr. Hastings. Any new developments?" asked the guest.

So the facts had to be stated, and, after all, it was not, perhaps, much regretted that the affair had been alluded to, although unintentionally, for Mr. Thompson's strong common-sense and practical way of looking at things, placed the matter to both father and daughter in a more cheerful light, and the discussion of it, which, try as they would, was really uppermost in their thoughts, was the best thing in the end, for after the talk each found it easier to dismiss it from the mind.

The next morning the carriage was at the door by eight o'clock and the luggage aboard.

"Good-by, Mr. Hastings, if things go well, promise that we shall see you at the Yews, with your charming daughter, some time next year. Come, Elsie, help me persuade him to say yes."

"Perhaps, but decision reserved ; however, I have promised Elsie a visit to Old England some day, and you may be sure yours will not be the last house we shall seek."

"Well, well, you're as obstinate as an Englishman. Kiss me, my dear, for I regard you as one of my daughters now. Indeed, you must come into my heart, to help make up for Ellen."

Elsie kissed the bluff hearty Briton, and then with eyes blinded by tears, bade good-by to Louisa.

"I wish you were my sister," whispered the warm-hearted English girl, as she embraced her. "I would so

like mother to know you. But you will come and see us some time next year, won't you?"

The Hermitage really felt and looked lonely to Elsie after the visitors had departed, for Louisa and she were very similar in their tastes and habits, and had become quite intimate. They had together explored all the famous places and picturesque points in the neighborhood, and the heiress of the Hermitage for the first time realized how much she had lost in not having a sister, or girl companion of or near her own age.

The trial was to take place at C——, the county town, and on the day appointed all those interested were assembled at an early hour, ready for the case to be called; for it was placed high up upon the docket. The trial promised to be an exciting one, and being of an unusual character, had caused a good deal of discussion among Mr. Hastings' neighbors, who were on hand in large force.

The proprietor of the Hermitage was not exactly a popular man among the lower classes and farmers, being considered somewhat too aristocratic, and as a magistrate his rulings had frequently given offence; but all respected him for his firmness, courage, and inflexible integrity; and now that an attempt was being made by a mere stranger to filch away his homestead, public opinion was roused in his favor, and the desire to see him come out victorious was intense.

"Say, Hiram, what do 'e think 'bout the squire's chances? Run pretty hard with him, eh?" said a tall, swarthy farmer who lived not far from the Hastings' home.

The Giraffe, who had been invested by Gretchen's careful hands in clean-starched white shirt, an unusual luxury, and otherwise dressed in his best hunting suit, stood conspicuous in the centre of a small group of loungers on the Court House square.

"Wall, naow, friend Clums, I'm blessed if it ain't kind o' skeary—but darn my butes, suthin' 'll drop ef that 'pop

go the weasel' feller ovar thar ever puts his hoof in the old place."

"What'll yer do about it? Guess 't'ill hev to go 'cordin' to law, an squire 'll hev to put up with 't, as well as a poorer man," remarked a young, sallow-faced man who just then joined the group.

The trapper frowned at him from his altitude, and his hands clasped nervously, as if he would like to strangle something, as he answered, rather scornfully:

"Ye'r almighty smart, Tim Allen, but guess yer ain't no lawyer. Ef a man's lived twenty years on a ranch, isn't he titled to it by persession, aye? an let me tell yer, friend Alf's agoing to hev persession of his ranch 's long 's he wants it, I reckon."

There were two or three present who looked as if they would like to dispute this rather despotic position, but they realized how little chance there was of getting the best of the trapper in an argument, and in case of a quarrel—which was to be considered among the possibilities—it was generally conceded that Hiram could lay out any two men in the country-side either with hands or weapons.

Just then the usual notice was given of the opening of court, and the people outside crowded in to secure eligible seats. The earlier cases on the docket proved of minor importance and were soon disposed of, all but one being given over to referees; so that, by 11 A.M., the "cause célèbre," as the wife of the senior counsel for the defence would have said, was reached, and the clerk called:

"Liscomb *vs.* Hastings.

"A suit to recover a certain property known as the Hermitage, situated in —— County and —— State.

"Are you ready for trial?"

The respective attorneys having signified their readiness, the case was formally opened by the senior attorney for the plaintiff, Mr. Anthony Ferns.

The attorney was a small man with intensely black hair and eyes, seemingly of Hebrew origin, and having a singularly nervous but impressive style of address. His voice was clear and high-pitched, and he spoke in carefully chosen words.

He stated the grounds on which his client based his claim. That his father, Thomas Liscomb, had purchased the estate of Nicholas Kuprianoff, a Russian, who had purchased it from the State, built the house, and laid out the grounds. That after the purchase was completed and paid for, but before it could be properly transferred and taken possession of, the said Thomas Liscomb, the purchaser, died suddenly, leaving his entire effects to his only child, Arthur Liscomb, the present claimant. The heir was absent in Australia at the time of his father's death, and his address was not known. So the personal effects, including a quantity of old books and papers, were, after a mere cursory examination by the owner of the premises rented by the elder Liscomb, boxed up to await the son's return.

All this happened over fifty years since, during which time nothing had been heard from, or of Arthur Liscomb, until a few months ago, when a letter was received at the Post-office, addressed to William Dexter or his children. It was delivered to Isaac Dexter, William Dexter, the father, having died thirty years ago, and found to be from Arthur Liscomb, asking if his father had left any property, personal or otherwise, and requesting that any papers left by the deceased be forwarded to him in Australia, at his expense.

Dexter and his sister were very much astonished at the receipt of the letter, having naturally enough supposed the younger Liscomb to be dead long before. But the books and papers, as it happened, were found in fair condition, and brought down from the attic, where they had lain with other odds and ends which had been accumulating there for half a century. They reached Australia safely,

and Arthur Liscomb, to his astonishment, found among the private papers the deed on which this suit was based. His father's memoranda showed that he had long desired to possess the Hermitage, and had made repeated offers for it; but the Russian proprietor refused all proposals, until he finally became involved in some trouble which necessitated his withdrawal from public observation for a time, and offered to dispose of the property to Liscomb; and so the son, now an old man, to his amazement and indignation, found that for half a century he had been living in obscurity and poverty, while legally owner of one of the finest estate in his native country.

"Verily, 'truth is stranger than fiction,'" said the counsel, dramatically, "and we are now ready to call our witnesses to prove our position, and to establish our rights—that is, after a word of further explanation from my colleague, Mr. Laycock."

The junior partner of the firm now arose, holding a bundle of papers in his left hand, while his right toyed gracefully with a singular-looking charm appended to his watch-guard. It represented a snake's head holding an egg in its mouth. Some said the worthy advocate resembled the reptile in question, being smooth and sleek, and of a generally slippery, oily appearance. Quite in contrast to his legal brother, he was stout and florid and of strongly sanguine temperament, with an almost bald crown, fringed by reddish hair.

Yes, Counsellor Laycock had a contented, well-fed appearance, and a placid smile which seemed, in its bland frankness, to be the very personification of integrity and urbanity. As a witty physician had once observed on seeing the two partners together: "Truly a legal marriage based upon physiological laws. Vinegar and sugar—clients, choose."

"May it please the court, after the very lucid way in

which my learned partner has presented the case, it only remains for me to say that we are willing to concede in advance that the present incumbent of the Hermitage property purchased it from a Mr. Whitely, who also had possibly bought it from the original proprietor, Nicholas Kuprianoff, although, we ask that both facts shall be clearly proven, and the deeds produced; but we are willing to concede this much in order to simplify matters and also to show that we make no charge whatever against the integrity of Mr. Hastings, whom we believe to be an honorable gentleman, and to be a victim of fraud himself in this matter." And the speaker waved his fat hand gracefully in the air, and smiled at the buzz of satisfaction which his statement had produced.

St. Johns jumped excitedly to his feet. "May it please your honor, we don't ask any concessions or compliments whatsoever, from the learned counsel. We hope to be able to show to the whole world where the knavery in this transaction really belongs. We ask no gratuitous testimony to our integrity."

"Mr. St. Johns, please sit down; you will have your opportunity after awhile," said the judge, quietly, with just a suspicion of a smile on his face, while the audience laughed loudly.

Smiling more blandly than before, and casting a provokingly comical look at the pugnacious St. Johns, the counsel proceeded. "What we distinctly and positively claim and can prove is, that Nicholas Kuprianoff was a rascal, and deliberately deeded and received payment for the property twice."

"That's a lie," came in strong, clear tones from the audience.

"Mr. Sheriff, arrest that man at once, and bring him before the court, and I will teach him to insult the court in this outrageous manner," said the judge, turning very red in the face.

But in vain the official passed among the spectators; the culprit was not to be found, and he was unwillingly obliged to report his failure to the judge.

"Well, I warn the spectators that if this occurs again the court-room will be cleared. Go on, Mr. Counsellor."

Though somewhat flurried by the blunt rejoinder to his proposition, the attorney still maintained his confident smile, as he proceeded to reiterate what he had said.

"Yes, your honor, I repeat that the man, Nicholas Kuprianoff, after having bargained and sold this property to my client's father, and received payment therefore, within a brief period disposed of it over again, as if he still owned it, to Mr. Whitely. The Russian has, in the course of nature, been in his grave for so many years, that his very existence would be now forgotten if it were not that retributive justice, in the person of my client, comes forward even at this late day, to open his dishonored grave, drag him thence, and hold him up to execration and scorn."

A low, mellow, mocking laugh ran through the house, but although the sheriff and his assistants were keenly on the alert, they failed to detect the offender.

The judge flushed angrily, and said, imperatively, "Mr. Sheriff," and then apparently changing his mind, motioned to Mr. Laycock to proceed.

"I will now close by saying that the Russian, after waiting some time and shrewdly concluding that the deed of sale had not been seen by anyone, and probably supposing that the younger Liscomb was deceased, deliberately resold the Hermitage to a Mr. Whitely, a stranger, who had just come into the country, and was looking for an eligible investment. We call our first witness, Arthur Liscomb."

Immediately there was a hum of expectancy in the court-room, and everybody leaned forward to see the plaintiff in the case. Nobody claimed to have any knowledge of him or his whereabouts, except his attorneys, and they had kept

their own counsel. No doubt this was done for the sake of dramatic effect, and to invest the case with an air of mystery, which might alarm and befog their opponents.

At the words of the junior counsel an elderly man arose and came forward from the obscurity of a pillar, which had hitherto effectually screened him from observation. As he advanced slowly toward the witness-stand, it was seen that he walked feebly, leaning upon a cane. He had a long, white beard, and wore a skull-cap, and was dressed in the style of about forty years before. It was generally decided among the ladies that he was quite a handsome old man, and the interest in the trial became intense.

"Pretty hard to be kept out of his property, if he really owns it."

"I'm sure he needs the property at his time of life."

"Anyhow Mr. Hastings is rich, and he can afford to lose it better than this man can," were a few of the remarks to be heard among the people in the seats, and standing by the walls.

"Silence in the court," shouted the officer, and the temporary confusion ceased, and again all was close attention.

In answer to questions of counsel the witness stated that his name was Arthur James Liscomb ; that he was seventy-four years old, having been twenty-four when he left home for Australia ; that he was born in Melville, and was the only child of Thomas and Mary Anne Liscomb, deceased.

After answering a variety of questions, mainly intended to bring out the points touched on by counsel in their opening addresses, Mr. Ferns turned to St. Johns, and smiling courteously said, "The witness is at your disposal, counsellor."

The counsellor for the defence rose with alacrity, and it was noticed that the witness at once seemed to lose his listless and weary air, which had enlisted a good deal of

sympathy for him among the audience, and became brighter and seemingly younger in appearance. He sat more upright in his chair, and bent eagerly toward St. Johns.

"You say your name is Arthur James Liscomb?" began the counsel.

"Yes," responded the other simply, at the same time raising his hand to his mouth, as if to arrest a short hacking cough with which he seemed to be troubled.

After a number of preliminary queries came, "Why did you not send for your father's papers and effects before? Why did you allow fifty years to pass away before thinking of your home and parent?"

The answer came readily enough: "My father and I had quarrelled, and being naturally very high-spirited, I would not write first to heal the breach. I had left home against my father's will, who wanted me to enter his office, and follow his business, whereas I wanted to see something of the world. This was the cause of the trouble. At last I accidentally heard of my father's death, through one who had just come from Melville, and that he had died very poor. This astonished me, as I knew that on leaving home my father had at least $20,000 in cash, but concluded he must have lost it in speculation of some sort. However, I wrote at once to some friends of mine here, now dead, to request particulars, and they fully corroborated what I heard, and informed me that the books, papers, etc., had been placed in Dexter's hands awaiting my orders. I felt the disappointment keenly, having counted on my father's property to set me up in business, and resolved never to return to my native land, or have anything to do with the paltry trash to which I was heir. But time softens all things, and so, a year ago, having become old myself, and retired from business, I experienced a strange longing toward the home of my youth, and a desire to know something of my parent's latter days, hence my letter, and the receipt of the

papers already referred to. On looking over the papers what was my surprise to find a deed, completed but a day or so before my father's decease, showing me that I was undoubted heir to the Hermitage estate, and then the mystery was all explained, and I now saw where my father had invested the savings of his lifetime, the $20,000 spoken of. I recollected his having repeatedly told me of his desire to possess this property, and his determination to own it, if possible, before he died."

This in substance was the evidence elicited by the severe cross-examination, in answer to numerous questions. And so carefully were the answers given that no effort of counsel availed to invalidate them in any degree. It appeared to be a straightforward story, without a flaw in any respect, and the sympathy of the audience appeared much divided when the aged witness left the stand.

The deed was here produced and read to the court by Mr. Ferns, and was the usual printed document of parchment filled in by the pen, stating that "for and in consideration of twenty thousand dollars, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, I, Nicholas Kuprianoff, the party of the first part, do grant, bargain, sell, and convey to Thomas Liscomb, party of the second part," etc.; then followed a minute description of the Hermitage property, and the deed was signed in full by Nicholas Kuprianoff, and also by Elias Stroub and George Gayling, long since deceased, but well remembered as reputable citizens of Melville.

The deed was also indorsed as having been properly registered at the Court House in Melville, and was signed by the registrar then in office, but now deceased.

"We submit this to the court and jury for the fullest examination and scrutiny. Everything is as clear as the day; we ask no concessions, no concealment," and here he glanced triumphantly at St. Johns and his partner, who looked rather depressed at present appearances.

The "Giraffe," who had managed to crowd himself pretty close to the bar, and had been fidgeting about in his seat nervously during the exhibition of the deed, could restrain himself no longer, although he knew the sheriff was almost at his elbow, and leaning his long neck toward Mr. St. Johns, blurted out in what was meant to be a whisper, but which sounded like the hoarse croaking of a raven: "Durn my butes, but ef that old crow does friend Alf eout of his hum, why, durn his skin, but I'll twist his innards for him."

"Sheriff, remove that man at once from the court-room," said the judge, peremptorily, when the irrepressible burst of merriment which this sally produced had somewhat subsided.

"Come, Hiram," said the official, who knew him well, and did not relish his commission, "come, you'll have to go out. The judge is angry," and he laid his hand upon the trapper's shoulder kindly.

"Loose yer holt, or suthin'll give way. Haw, haw, haw! to go to put a feller aeout cos he talks in his sleep. Haw, haw! Jedge, I 'casionally whisper kind o' in my sleep. Jes' tell yer man to be still, will yer, or maybe he'll get hurt."

The trapper had now drawn himself up to his full proportions and looked down on the officers who crowded around him, as a full grown cat might at a parcel of kittens.

To put the athletic and fearless mountaineer out of the room by main force would, they well knew, be an almost hopeless task, although there were four of them, and so they contented themselves at first by coaxing him.

But at this juncture Mr. Hastings rose and requested the judge that the offender be allowed to remain, promising to be responsible for his future good behavior.

"It was an involuntary offence, your Honor, arising from his friendship for me."

"Very well, Mr. Hastings, he can remain on your responsibility."

"Haw, haw!" laughed the culprit, in a hoarse whisper, "but, darn my butes, ef I don't twist his lying throttle anyways."

Although this was heard by half the court-room, no further notice was taken, and the trial proceeded.

Witnesses were now put on the stand to prove the signatures attached to the deed. Children, and neighbors' children, of the defunct signers—all belonging to a later generation, and many of them of seemingly the same age as the claimant—swore distinctly to the signatures of the registrar, the witnesses, and the Russian himself. There did not seem the slightest doubt as to the genuineness of the instrument.

Truly, things began to look black for the owner of the Hermitage and his brave daughter, who sat by her father, occasionally whispering to him. The cross-examination of these witnesses was severe and relentless, but failed to affect their testimony as to the genuineness of the signatures. Witnesses now came forward to identify the plaintiff. After fifty years' absence this was, of course, not an easy thing to accomplish, and the friends of the defendant were correspondingly hopeful. But these people—persons well known in the neighborhood, and two from a distance, six in all—swore as positively to the identity of the claimant as others had to the genuineness of the deed. And the evidence was more convincing because in three cases the testimony was given with evident reluctance. One, William Craig, a man of sixty-eight years, declared he would rather cut off his right hand than be the means of depriving Mr. Hastings of his property. "For, he has always been a good friend to me, and I wouldn't have come here to day, only the law brought me, and seeing I am here, I must speak the truth."

This witness was confused somewhat by the shrewd examination of the junior counsel for the defence, Mr. Allen,

but held substantially to his first statement as to how he knew the complainant to be Arthur Liscomb.

"I used to go to school with him, and he used some words in a way I never heard anybody else say them, and then we often used to go in swimming together, and I noticed that two of his toes on the right foot was growed together, and all of us boys noticed it, and we got to call him web-toed." The witness swore that on recently meeting Liscomb, and thinking he recognized him, he requested him to pull off his right boot, which he did, "and there was the web, as I remembered it well."

It is useless to give the details; suffice it to say that Mr. Hastings' attorneys did all that men could do to disprove testimony and break down evidence, but although they brought forward witnesses on their side who testified that the plaintiff was not and could not be Arthur Liscomb, yet they did not hold out consistently in the fiery cross-examination to which sapient Anthony Ferns subjected them. So true is it, that a strong affirmation will always carry more weight with the mass than an equally positive denial. The affirmation gets possession of the mind, and "possession is nine points of the law." This is shown in the history of civil and religious life. How false customs and beliefs which were instituted with strong affirmative authority have held their way! No matter how disproved by fact or reason, or both, the false impression holds possession of the mind, and nothing but a mental or moral earthquake will suffice to uproot it. So all efforts of counsel on the present occasion failed to dislodge the conviction from the minds of the majority present that the plaintiff was the man he claimed to be. The improbability of witnesses being able to recognize anyone not a relative from their own family circle, or who had not been associated with them on terms of close intimacy, after a lapse of over half a century, was earnestly dwelt upon and had due weight with the thinkers

present, but the defendant and his counsel felt that the positive testimony of the witnesses for the prosecution had made a powerful impression upon the jury and the mass of the audience. The witnesses on both sides had been examined with the exception of Mr. Hastings when the court closed for the day.

St. Johns and his colleague differed somewhat as to the advisability of calling the proprietor of the Hermitage to the witness-stand at all. One thought that certain questions which the opposing counsel would be sure to ask, would elicit answers necessarily prejudicial to their case, owing to an awkward combination of circumstances; while the other insisted that Mr. Hastings' clear statement of the facts, coupled with his well-known integrity, would have an excellent influence on the jury. The opinion of the latter, seconded as it was by the defendant's own desire, prevailed, and it was settled that he be called on the first thing after opening court next morning.

Mr. Hastings wished the two attorneys to take up their residence at the Hermitage during the course of the trial, but St. Johns decided it would be better to remain at the hotel, for some special reasons which he had, and also, because they would be very busy.

"Now, papa, you must not worry, for even if the worst comes, and we lose our dear home, we have each other, and if necessary, I can, I know, find something to do to help our income."

"My dear child, you have your mother's spirit, and are very comforting to me, bearing this trial and the publicity and annoyance so bravely. But I have faith that St. Johns may find some way to thwart these scoundrels yet. If I lose this property I shall be comparatively a poor man, for I have spent most of my wealth upon this place. Yet we shall not be so poor that you need think of what you speak of."

"Indeed, father," and her dark eyes shone in the gathering dusk, "I feel anyway as if I ought to have some definite occupation, for I really feel more and more that no one is justified in living an idle life in this world, and being supported by the labor of others. It seems cowardly to me. The toilers all around, and I nothing but a receiver."

"Elsie, my dear, don't talk that way, for you lead a useful enough life, and cannot really be called an idler. Why, you are my housekeeper, and I am sure you visit the poor and help bless the lives of many."

"But, father, all I do is but a crumb compared to what some women do. Take Miss Watson; why, she does five times the amount of charitable work that I do, and yet supports her mother, and her dead sister's two children, and helps keep house into the bargain."

"Miss Watson is a noble woman, Elsie, and I now see from whom you got your ideas. Believe me, I appreciate your desire to help bear your share of the sad burden of the world, and will be glad in any way to help you in your plans if they seem wise. Wealth or a competency does not, indeed, release any human being from the responsibilities of life—in fact, it rather increases them. But there is the dinner-bell, and you must be really hungry. I know I am."

About an hour after dinner Mr. Hastings was summoned to the library to meet a visitor, and was astonished on entering the room to find himself confronted by the redoubtable Mr. Ferns, senior counsel for his antagonist.

"You are surprised to see me, Mr. Hastings," said that worthy, as the other bowed stiffly, after his momentary amazement at this bearding the lion in his den. "But, believe me, I am here as a friend, and altogether in your interest."

"I am ready to hear anything you have to say to me," responded the other, calmly, motioning his visitor to a seat.

"I come, Mr. Hastings, to open negotiations with you

on behalf of my client, looking to an amicable settlement of this most unpleasant affair."

"Really, I must decline to entertain any proposition whatsoever from the man who, I believe, under a false pretence, is trying to rob me of my property," returned the proprietor of the mansion, firmly. "So if that is the meaning of your presence here I presume that our interview is at an end."

"Pardon me, Mr. Hastings. I am well aware of the feelings with which you naturally regard us, and I do not blame you under the peculiar circumstances. But please to remember that I am only a professional man doing my duty on behalf of my client, and you surely cannot blame me for that. Besides, Mr. St. Johns assured me not an hour since that you would give me a hearing on this question, as it is merely to make a proposition, which you are, of course, at liberty to accept or reject, as you see fit."

"Very well," said the gentleman, after a momentary struggle with himself, "as you have taken the trouble to seek me here, I suppose you are at least entitled to the courtesy of a hearing. Pray proceed, and be as brief as possible, as my daughter awaits me."

"Thank you. Now to business. You must be aware that the trial is virtually over, and the probabilities largely in favor of my client. Forgive me for speaking so bluntly," seeing that his hearer evinced some irritation, "but as a lawyer, who has had an extensive practice, taking all objective and subjective matters into consideration, I think I am justified in saying that nothing short of a miracle could prevent a verdict in our favor."

"I really do not see justification for such a statement. Surely it is not a usual thing for an interested lawyer to express himself so positively regarding a cause which has not as yet reached the jury," said Mr. Hastings, sarcastically.

The other moved a little nervously at this retort, and replied, "No, not usual perhaps, but frequently done when we know our jury and have such evidence to support us. But to come to the gist of the matter, let me say that my esteemed client, Mr. Arthur Liscomb, feeling the very deepest commiseration and sympathy for you and Miss Hastings——"

"Stop!" said the master of the mansion in a loud voice, starting from his chair, "don't you dare to refer to my daughter in any such way. We neither of us ask either commiseration or sympathy from Mr. Arthur Liscomb, as you term him. Just finish what you have to say and end this interview as speedily as possible."

"Oh, certainly, certainly. I meant no offence," said the attorney, blandly, who also had arisen and retreated a step, so vehement had been the manner of the other. "I merely desired to say that Mr. Liscomb offers to compromise this matter by giving up all claim to the estate on condition that you will simply pay to him in cash the $20,000 which his father paid for it fifty years since, with interest at six per cent. to date; we will be satisfied with simple interest."

"Really, your generosity is astounding. No doubt you have accurately calculated what the interest would amount to in half a century? Cool, upon my word. No, sir; go back to the knave who employed you, and tell him that I will take no proposal of any kind from him. If the law gives him the estate, I suppose I must submit to the robbery, but I refuse to hold intercourse with thieves."

"How dare you use such expressions! Now we will show you our power, and will turn you into the street," said the attorney, springing to his feet in a fury, and shaking his fist at the other.

This was too much for Mr. Hastings, who sprang toward the visitor just as he passed through the door, which he had opened as he arose. The owner of the mansion was rap-

idly following the rash lawyer, with the intention of forcibly ejecting him from the premises, when a hand was laid upon his arm, and a voice said in a low tone: "Father!" This recalled the irate man to himself, and feeling ashamed of his momentary passion, he suffered his daughter to lead him back into the library. The hall door slammed after the retreating attorney, and presently his vehicle was heard rolling rapidly away. "Why, father, what were you going to do to that man? Wasn't it one of those lawyers we saw to-day in court—the one who made the first speech?"

"Yes," replied her father, walking up and down the room as if to regain his self-command; "yes, it was the fellow they call Ferns." Then, laughing heartily, "With regard to your other question, as to what I was going to do to him, I can hardly say. I suppose I meant to kick him into the street, if I had caught him."

"But what brought him here to-night, father—was it about the trial?"

"Elsie, he came to offer to compromise the matter, to offer me my own property, if I would agree to pay $20,000 and the interest on it for fifty years, all cash down—something in the neighborhood of $100,000. What do you think of that for cool insolence?"

"Why, surely the property is not worth so much as that!" exclaimed Elsie in alarm at the audacity of the proposal.

"It would probably bring sixty or seventy thousand at a forced sale, but I would not part with it for even a hundred thousand," said her father.

However, the episode, now it was past, was a source of considerable amusement to both father and daughter, sad as they felt otherwise about their home.

"I really feel ashamed of myself, showing so much passion before that pettifogging scoundrel, but I lost my control before I knew it. It shows we never quite conquer

ourselves. I have not been in such a temper for at least fifteen years, but in early life I was very passionate."

"I never remember seeing you look so angry, papa, before ; why, you looked quite savage."

"It is going back to the savage condition again to lose control of one's temper, my dear. But it is all over now, and I must try to keep free for another fifteen years. But it is time for retiring, as to-morrow promises to be an anxious day for us all."

## CHAPTER XXX.

### IN DEEP WATERS.

At least an hour before court formally opened every seat was occupied, for the interest had become intensified in view of the examination of Mr. Hastings on the second morning of the trial. The busy tongues of the audience kept things pretty lively before the opening of court, and varied indeed were the opinions exchanged. The age and apparent feebleness and poverty of the plaintiff had enlisted much sympathy, which was enhanced by the fact that, being a stranger, at least to the present generation, nothing was known against him. On the other hand, the defendant was reputed a rich man, and who had frequently come into conflict with the baser and less scrupulous elements of the community.

"Squire's gone up this time, I'm afeard," remarked a farmer to Hiram as that worthy brushed against him entering the court-room.

The "Giraffe" shut one eye sententiously, regarding the speaker comically with the remaining optic.

"Naow don't you be riled 'bout the squire, friend James, cos the squire's got lots of friends yet, an' purty good ones too, that'll see him through all right."

"Yaas, but yer can't go ag'in' evidence, Hiram, an' the evidence's clean t'other way. As I says to Bessie, this very morning, 'Evidence is evidence, an', durn me, but the Liscomb old man's got it. He's the old man's son sure's yer born.' 'Yes,' says she, kind o' sharp like, 'an' he's the old man hisself, an' the son of his father, an' that father's

name's just Thomas Liscomb. You can bet your bottom dollar on that.' Them's jest the words Bess said, an' women knows 'bout sich matters mor'n most men; leastwise that's my 'speariance."

The trapper laughed good-humoredly without answering, as he pushed forward to the front. After court was formally opened, Mr. Hastings was called to testify on his own behalf. He briefly, in answer to questions by his counsel, told how and when he became the possessor of the Hermitage, some twenty-seven years before.

"I received my deed from Mr. Whitely, and it was properly registered in the registrar's office."

"Did Mr. Whitely show you his deed from the Russian, Nicholas Kuprianoff, the original proprietor?" asked St. Johns.

"Yes, and at my request gave it to me, as of course he had no further use for it," replied the witness.

A number of other questions brought out clearly, that the present incumbent of the Hermitage had come into possession of the property by honest purchase and had held undisputed and peaceable occupancy for twenty-seven years. The first question asked by Anthony Ferns, whose small eyes snapped maliciously, as he glared at the man who had so insulted him the night before, was: "Have you at present in your possession any deed for this property of which you claim to be the lawful owner?"

The tone and manner were so insulting that the witness at first was inclined to refuse answering, and glanced at St. Johns, who immediately rose and protested against consuming valuable time by irrelevant questions. "The witness has sworn to having received a deed for the property from Mr. Whitely, and I must request the court to protect us against insolent and useless questions."

"Your honor, the question is neither irrelevant nor useless, for we refuse to accept the defendant's statement, even

on oath, with regard to his having a legal deed to this property. We all know that men have frequently held possession unquestioned for a longer period than twenty-seven years, when in reality they had no more legal right to the property involved than the veriest pauper on the highway. We ask your honor to compel the witness to answer this vital question, which, all must allow, the evident unwillingness of the other side to answer, affords grave grounds for suspicion."

"Forbear your inferences, Mr. Ferns," said the judge, severely; "the question is a proper one, and the witness will please answer."

Very significant were the glances exchanged on all sides during this wrangle, and the impression left was not favorable to the defence. Mr. Hastings spoke slowly and distinctly, fixing his eyes calmly upon the satisfied face of the cross-examiner.

"The reason I hesitated, your honor," glancing toward the judge, "was the evident malice with which the question was put, and considering that the questioner barely escaped deserved chastisement at my hands a few hours since, for an insolent proposal to compromise this case."

The witness was not allowed to conclude this statement without interruption, for both lawyers for the plaintiff loudly protested against the introduction of irrelevant matter; but the speaker never faltered until the final word which put the jury and audience in possession of a fact which certainly added new zest to the trial, even if it did not help either side.

"Mr. Hastings, answer the question directly, without circumlocution," said the judge.

"I ask you again," said Ferns, imperatively, his flushed cheek showing his annoyance, "have you in your possession any deed to the property—Yes or No?"

"I have not the deed referred to at present in my possession. It was stolen from me."

"We want none of your theories to account for the non-possession of what a few moments ago you swore you had. The jury will note that the witness acknowledges that he has no deed for this property. Is in fact merely a squatter upon it."

"Again I will ask the court to protect the witness from insult," said St. Johns, springing to his feet.

"Have you any other questions to ask the witness?" said the judge, frowning at the cross-examiner. "If not, he may retire."

"A moment, your honor. Mr. Hastings, you said a few moments since, that the original deed made by Nicholas Kuprianoff was given to you by Mr. Whitely. Can you produce that?"

"I object to these unnecessary questions which have no bearing whatsoever upon the case," said the senior attorney for the defence.

The judge ruled against this question, on which Ferns noted an exception, exclaiming tartly, "I hope the jury will note this. We asked the question because we are morally certain the defendent has no such deed, for it would be in their own interest to produce it, as going to corroborate the story of the purchase from Mr. Whitely."

The witness was then questioned further by St. Johns and testified as to the robbery, first of the desk and then of the house, claiming that the deeds were abstracted on one of those occasions. St. Johns himself then entered the witness-box and testified as to his personal knowledge of the first robbery, and the claim that Mr. Hastings made, on examining his rifled desk, that he had lost some important papers.

Mr. Laycock strenuously objected to hearsay testimony, and it was stricken out by order of the court.

As the prosecution had pooh-poohed the story of the robbery, St. Johns determined to put it beyond cavil, and

so called several witnesses to the stand, and lastly summoned Hiram to go up and testify. Great astonishment was evinced in the crowded room as the gaunt form of the tall trapper appeared in the witness-box, gazing down benignly from his elevated vantage ground upon the sea of human faces below. Someone said he resembled a tall pine-tree that had been stripped by a storm and then struck by lightning.

"You swear to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," said the clerk, in his dry, official tone.

"You bet yer butes," answered the witness, looking down on him with what was intended to be a smile of encouragement; "durn me ef I don't, pardner," he continued, but utterly ignoring the book which the other was impatiently holding up for him to kiss.

"Kiss the book, then," peremptorily demanded the official.

Hiram opened his eyes as if amazed at such a request.

"Kiss thet; noa, noa, stranger, not ef this critter knows itself. Ha, ha! why, pardner, ef I kissed thet black thing thar, Gretchen 'd not let me kiss her agin in a month o' Sundays, ha, ha!"

Even the severe judge could not resist the infection of the laugh which circled round at this most unlooked-for argument against yielding to this stupid legal form.

"My friend," said the judge, kindly, "that book is the Bible, and you are merely required to touch it with your lips as a legal form."

"Haw, haw! An do yer tell me, jedge, thet black thing's a Bible? Durn me ef I didn't s'pose it wuz a plug o' 'baccy, an mighty onclean at thet." So saying, the witness took the volume from the clerk, and after making a grimace that set the spectators in a roar, gingerly pressed it to his lips, and then deliberately proceeded to wipe his mouth with a huge yellow and red bandanna which he produced

from one of his capacious pockets. Hiram was merely called to identify a paper which he found on the road near the Hermitage, on the morning of the robbery. Returning home about three o'clock A.M. he had, when near Mr. Hastings' gate, been passed rapidly by a gig with two men in it, and immediately after found the paper referred to, which Mr. Hastings recognized as having been in the same drawer where he had kept the deeds. Owing to Mr. St. Johns' advice, the fact of the robbery or robberies had not been made public, and were known to but few, but now that the non-production of the deeds was likely to militate against the defendant, it was deemed necessary to show what had become of them, and why they could not be produced. Also this was of more importance since all evidence of the registration of the purchase had been destroyed by the burning of the court house, in which the books of registration had been kept. After the witnesses were all called, a recess was taken by the court, it being generally understood that on reassembling, the lawyers were to make their pleas, and then if they did not consume too much time, the case would go to the jury that night.

During the recess Elsie left her father's side, and after some little trouble succeeded in making her way to Mr. St. Johns' desk. He smiled as she approached, and gave her a seat beside him. They were alone within the bar, the other legal lights having gone out for a brief lunch or breathing spell, as the case might be. St. Johns having to prepare some brief notes had decided not to leave the court room. He looked worn and anxious as if he had not slept much the previous night. Still he spoke cheerfully and tried to cheer her spirits, which were depressed enough. Conscientious lawyers and physicians are the real vicarious sufferers. For the time being they identify themselves with the client or patient, suffer as he suffers, and rejoice as he rejoices. Thus they are constantly living

a dual nature, and the familiar "we" in the legal man's address is more of a reality than many suppose. St. Johns was worried about the case, and Elsie saw it at once.

"Now, Mr. St. Johns, I have a great favor to ask, and I want you to promise to grant it."

"Of course I will grant it, my dear child, if I can properly do so," he answered, a little hesitatingly, as if he half anticipated the question.

"Thank you so much. I would not dare to ask it only you are such an old friend. Now, please tell me candidly, is there any chance, as things now stand, of our winning this case and saving the property?"

"I will confess things look a little dark for us, but no one can tell what a jury will do."

"Do answer me frankly, Mr. St. Johns, as a friend. Don't you think the case will go against us? I will not tell anyone; it is between us two. I have a reason for the question."

There was no resisting the pleading eyes, so after a momentary pause he said in a half whisper: "With that jury I'm afraid there is not much chance. In spite of all our efforts Ferns has succeeded in packing the jury-box to suit himself, as he knew the men better than we did. Of course, we may win the case, and at any rate we shall appeal if it goes against us. But if you can think of anything in the shape of evidence that may help us, my dear Elsie, let us have it, and speedily, for matters are pretty close with us."

"Thank you, for speaking so frankly," she said, rising to go.

"Mind, not a word of this to anybody," he warned her, as she quietly glided away from him. "Wonder what the young woman is up to this time?" he said to himself, as he watched her seek out the "Giraffe" and pass out of the court-room in earnest conversation with the trapper. He

was half vexed with himself for having been betrayed into an admission of the almost hopelessness of the case, but something in her manner suggested that she intended taking some steps based upon his information, and so he had spoken more freely than he purposed, thinking possibly she might know someone who could cast light on the darkness which at present shrouded the defence.

"You will give him this note, Hiram, and bring me an answer as soon as possible."

The note which Elsie put into the trapper's willing hand ran as follows:

DEAR FRIEND: You said to me on parting last time, "If things seem to be going wrong let me know at once." I cannot leave my father alone, or I would try and go to you, but I send this by our ever faithful friend Hiram. Yes, things are going, I fear, very wrong, and the trial certainly is going against us. If you can suggest anything let me know soon, please, by Hiram.

Your ever loving daughter,

ELSIE HASTINGS.

"Durn me butes, Elsie"—Hiram always called her Elsie when alone with her, and he was much excited, having known her from babyhood; but before others it was always "Miss Elsie"—"ef I doan't fotch yer the word from the old one 'fore court's out why jest say Hiram's an all-fired snake thet ain't good's his word; thet's so." So saying the sinewy, lithe mountaineer started off at a pace that promised a speedy termination to his journey.

On the reopening of court the senior counsel for the plaintiff began his address, and a very masterly effort it was, taking everything into consideration. He spoke with an animus which showed even more than the ordinary interest in the success of a client. It was indeed a personal matter with Mr. Ferns, for he felt that he had been grievously insulted by the defendant and meant that he should feel the full weight of his vengeance. He reviewed the

evidence on both sides skilfully, and was very sarcastic in alluding to the non-production of the deed. In short, he made a very powerful plea for a verdict in favor of his client, and the half-suppressed murmur of applause which greeted his ears as he sat down convinced him that he had made a favorable impression. Just as the speech was closing a note was quietly put into Elsie's hand by someone behind her, and in the friendly shadow of the post against which she was sitting she read as follows :

MY DEAR CHILD: Do not allow your lawyer to make his address to-day. You will hear from me about eleven o'clock to-night.

Your loving friend,

THE EXILE.

There was still plenty of time for a moderate speech, and if all were willing a possibility of getting the case into the jury's hands before dusk, but as St. Johns rose to commence his address a note reached him, which seemed to change his intention, and he announced that as his speech would probably be lengthy, he did not wish to enter on it at that late hour, and proposed a postponement until the following morning. This was bitterly opposed by Ferns, who justly feared that the effect of his address might have somewhat passed from the minds of the jury by the morning. He claimed that there was abundance of time, and urged warmly that the trial should proceed. Under ordinary circumstances St. Johns would have preferred going on with the trial, but he did not think of doing it after Elsie's note reached him, in which she asked as a special favor that he should not speak that night. So the judge finally agreed to occupy the remainder of the afternoon with some minor business, and the case of Liscomb *vs.* Hastings was postponed until the following morning.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### AN ORDEAL.

When Elsie reached home with her father she saw a handsome vehicle, drawn by a stylish-looking black horse, enter the avenue leading to the house, and quickly recognized her cousin Esmond as the driver. She at once went out to greet him, and found, to her surprise, that he had come expressly to take her out for a good drive.

"We have seen very little of each other lately, Elsie," he said, "and you are looking quite pale, with this miserable court-business, and not taking your usual out-door exercise."

She felt this to be true, and as there was three hours before dinner, she decided to accept the invitation if her father was willing.

"Certainly, my child; you ought to be out more, but you must tell me when you come back how you influenced St. Johns so as to have that case postponed until to-morrow morning. Why, he told me he intended to have the thing before the jury to-night. But to-night, or to-morrow, it won't make much difference, I fear, in the issue of the trial. I can see the jury have about made up their minds. Why, when that scoundrelly lawyer was making sport of my inability to produce the deed, did you notice how they all smiled?"

Elsie had noticed it, but she said some cheering words, and joined her cousin, who was pacing up and down impatiently on the platform.

"My uncle will make you as gloomy as himself if you let

this thing occupy your attention so, Elsie," he said, with some asperity, as they drove away.

"Why, Harry, how can you call father gloomy. He is one of the most cheerful of men generally, and if he feels a little sad just now, I am sure it is natural when people are trying to rob him of his property."

"He'll have plenty left if he does lose this. He will not be a poor man then by any means."

"Perhaps not poor, but it will cramp him dreadfully, and then to think of losing our home so;" and here a bright tear in spite of herself rolled down her cheek. This seemed to touch him keenly, and his petulance at once disappeared and his tone became sympathetic and even tender.

"Elsie, I'm going to try and help you in this matter, for I think more of you than I do of anyone else in the world. I can never forget your kindness to me as a boy. Your memory has been with me in all my wanderings, and take it all in all, my cousin, you are the best woman I ever knew."

She opened her eyes very wide at this speech, and colored with pleasure, as she answered: "Harry, I have suffered a great deal of anxiety on your account—more than I can tell—and when you went away from home to that far-off Australia, leaving us under a cloud as you did, I never forgot you for a day until you returned. And now I do hope you are going to settle down and become a good, useful man."

"That is just what I want to do, and I want you to help me. If you will help me, I have no fears of the future." The steel bright eyes fixed themselves on her face as if they would magnetize her, and indeed she did feel his strong influence over her at the moment, coupled at the same time with a feeling of distrust which she could not explain to herself. It was as if she felt that her cousin was playing a part and rather overdoing it. "Elsie, it is no use denying it, you have been the guardian angel of my life from boy-

hood up, and bad as I may have been I should have been infinitely worse if it had not been for your influence."

It was a delightful afternoon, and the late September air was crisp and tonic, having neither the lethargic heat of summer, nor yet the depressing cold of winter; calling neither for zephyr raiment to do mere eye-service, nor for the oppressive garments which a little later would be in active requisition. It was pleasant enough to allow these two to permit the steed to take his own gait, and trot or walk as seemed to him most fitting, while they abandoned themselves to earnest conversation. Elsie enjoyed the trip much, for the close atmosphere of the court-room had affected her most unpleasantly, and the air now felt as the breezes from Mount Hygeia itself. But her cousin's manner annoyed her, and she could not resist the impression that something unpleasant was going to happen.

"Elsie," he said, suddenly looking up after a short pause in the conversation, "I had a particular object in asking you to ride this afternoon. Can you guess it, coz?"

"Why, no, Harry; you have such a fertile brain that I should need the gift of second sight to be able to follow its mazy wanderings."

He suddenly flung the reins over the dashboard, and, turning round, took her right hand in his.

"Elsie, I want to ask you to be my wife."

Absolutely petrified with astonishment she sat immovable, gazing at him, and quite unconscious that he held her hand. At length she found words, and taking her hand quickly away from his, exclaimed in tones which fairly quivered with amazement, "Harry Esmond, what on earth do you mean?"

Not at all disconcerted, as if her astonishment had been at least partly looked for, he answered, slowly and deliberately: "Just what I said, Elsie. I ask you—yes more, I beg of you—to be my wife. You are the only being I really

love on earth. Marry me and you can make me what you will. Now, Elsie, you surely love me enough to marry me? You can save me, and make a new man of me."

"Please don't say any more on this subject, Harry. I cannot think what can have possessed you to talk in this way. Why, remember we are first cousins, and brought up together like brother and sister. I could as soon think of marrying my brother."

He listened patiently to her statements, but returned steadily to the charge, meeting all her arguments and objections in a manner which showed her that he had thoroughly prepared himself for the interview, and had thought carefully over all the points of objection she would likely bring forward. At last, somewhat irritated by his pertinacity, she exclaimed: "Why, Roland St. Johns proposed to me last summer at your suggestion, and you know you promised to aid him in his suit in every way you could. You can't deny it, Harry," and she regarded him indignantly.

It was now his turn to look surprised and annoyed. A sort of smothered oath escaped him as he blurted out angrily: "Who told you that? Has he dared?"

"Oh, no," she said, quickly, "he has not betrayed your confidence. I heard it from another source, which I know is reliable."

He seemed relieved, and his usual audacity returned, as he answered with assumed carelessness: "Since you know so well, I may as well confess that I did support Roland's suit with you, but I did it for a blind, as I saw he was madly in love with you. You don't suppose, Elsie, that I ever seriously contemplated your marrying that weak-headed fool?"

"Harry Esmond!" she said, indignantly, and even his hardihood quailed somewhat before the contempt he saw plainly speaking from her eyes. "I will not hear such

language about one whose intimate friend you have pretended to be so long. This is playing the traitor in earnest. Yet," she added, sarcastically, "you seem to think that a traitor to his friends could make a good husband."

He flushed angrily and bit his nether lip until the blood showed. Seizing the reins he drove furiously along for a mile or so without saying a word, but conscious that he had lost the first move of his game. At length he slackened the animal to a walk, and half smiling, turned toward his cousin, who had not yet quite overcome her natural resentment at his treachery toward her friend Roland.

"Elsie, forgive me. I am a queer fellow, I know, and you are an angel in comparison. I did treat St. Johns shabbily, and I own it. But it was my affection for you that impelled me to do it. He pleaded with me so strongly that I had to agree to help him, and then afterward I found out that I loved you too well to allow anyone else to win you. You will forgive me, won't you?"

She could not find it in her nature to be obdurate with such pleading—which of her sex could? and so she answered, "It was unworthy of you, but let us try and forget it, and say no more on this subject at all. Yes, promise me that you will never recur to this matter again. You must, if we are to be friends." She spoke decidedly, and he moved about uneasily, flicking the flies off the horse's back with the whip.

"Elsie, I cannot make such a promise; I must speak about it. More depends upon it than you think."

"Depends on what? will you be good enough to explain yourself?" she responded, coldly, showing by her whole manner how exceedingly annoyed she was.

"I will do so," he said, almost nervously, as if doubtful of the reception his statement might receive. "Well,

then, according to all I can learn, this Arthur Liscomb will win his suit, and your father will lose the Hermitage." She made no sign, and he proceeded. "Now, I am acquainted with the man, knew him in Australia, and befriended him there, having at different times lent him large sums of money, which he has never been able to return." A dreadful suspicion crossed her mind.

"Surely, you, Harry Esmond, did not——"

"Oh, no," he said, anticipating her words; "how could you think so? I urged him all I could to try to effect a settlement, but never to bring it into court. Trust me, I sympathize with my uncle in this matter only less than you do. But what I was going to say was this. Arthur Liscomb owes me so much money that he is practically in my power, and I can insist on his dropping the suit at once if I choose. At least he will do so if I will give him a quit claim for what he is indebted to me. I cannot bear the Hermitage to pass out of the family. My uncle is advanced in life, it would be almost death to him to lose his property. It remains for you to say the words, and he remains undisputed proprietor for life, and nobody but you and I will be the wiser."

"And the price I am to pay for such a sacrifice on your part?" she demanded, with whitened lips, and a singular hardness of voice.

"Be my wife, Elsie, and you will save your father's happiness, your childhood's home, and secure a devoted husband," he said, with a pathos and tenderness which she hardly thought he was capable of.

She sat still as death, and then the paleness left her face, and the tightness relaxed around her heart, and the red blood suffused her features and coursed wildly through her brain. She knew the Hermitage was slowly but surely slipping from their grasp; her father's anguished face came before her, as it seemed, mutely asking her for some way of

escape—and then the home of her childhood, and youth, and womanhood so far. Why, every stone on it seemed to grow in value, every flower to take on an added lustre. The dear old home to go into the hands of strangers! Then this way of escape. This cousin Harry, whom she certainly loved in a way with a sisterly affection, she could learn to love him as a wife, she supposed, but the thought was strange yet. It did not seem such a severe penalty after all, although she shrunk from the thought with such horror when he first broached the topic. But suddenly a face came before her, a face of wonderful repose and dignity and intelligence, and the deep-brown eyes seemed to look into her inmost being, and then her whole nature revolted against this plotting, scheming, selfish cousin who by contrast seemed so low in his instincts and purposes. Until she thought of the face, the man beside her seemed fairly lovable, as men go, but now she felt how different he was, and how impossible what he sought. And all at once she thought of the words, "If things seem going wrong let me know at once," and the answer to her message as received from the Patriarch some three hours before.

"Take me home, Harry, it is turning cold. I will give you an answer to-morrow morning."

"Better to-night, Elsie, so that the trial need go no farther. Remember if Liscomb wins, the place will be immediately sold, as he is heavily in debt to others as well as to me, though I am his principal creditor."

As they sped rapidly homeward, he said: "Promise me, not a word to my uncle, Elsie. You can see the reason for this!"

She had refused to give him an answer to his proposal until the morning, but willingly agreed not to mention the matter to her father while it was pending; "and never," she added, "unless advisable."

She proceeded at once to the dining-room, habited as she was, rather than keep the dinner waiting by a special toilet.

"You look all the better for your ride, my dear, and have more color than you have had for a week. Is not your cousin coming in to dinner?"

"No, father, not to-day; he had some urgent business, connected with the bank, to transact to-night."

The meal passed quietly, and Mr. Hastings retired early, and advised his daughter to do the same; but she said she would read awhile before retiring. She was sitting in the library, trying to read, but in reality thinking of the tangle which had come into the hitherto rather even threads of her skein of life, when, just as the mantle-clock struck eleven, a light tap came at the window.

"Ah, Hiram," she said, as she opened the frame to greet the trapper, and receive from him the expected note from the Exile, and at once started back, as she heard a mellow voice say quietly:

"May a friend enter at this unseasonable hour?" and, without pausing for reply, Adolph stepped into the room.

Blushing with surprise and pleasure, she clasped his eagerly offered hand, saying: "I thought it was Hiram, and certainly never dreamed of so soon having the pleasure of welcoming you to the Hermitage. Father would be so pleased, I really think I ought to tell him you are here."

"Not on any account, as I suppose he has retired. I came to see you," he added naively, looking the satisfaction he felt at finding her alone. "I bear a letter from my father—" handing it to her as he spoke. "Please ignore my presence while you read it."

She at once opened it, and read as follows:

DEAREST CHILD: To-morrow morning, there will be, at my instance, another witness in the court-room. Whether he can do your cause any special service at this critical stage, I am unable to say,

but think he can at least shed some light on one or two points which at present are obscure. Ask Mr. St. Johns to call for the *new* witness when he is ready. Ever your friend,

THE EXILE.

"A short note, as you see; but a volume would not express the deep sympathy your aged friend feels for you and your respected father in this trying crisis. The evidence, I am sorry to say, appears to be against you, and is seemingly without flaw; but still you must not lose heart, for I think the new witness, who is an old acquaintance of father's, can do something to establish your father's perfect integrity in the matter, which in any case will be a satisfaction—not," he added, as if doubtful whether he had chosen the right words—"not that any one doubted that for a moment who knows Mr. Hastings, but I mean the public, who do not know him, and might be prejudiced by what that evil-minded attorney says."

"Yes," she said, as if to herself, "that would be much; for I would not have my dear father's fair name tarnished even by a breath of a doubt, knowing him to be the very soul of honor."

She spoke strongly and with flashing eyes, and head upright; and the visitor's face glowed with admiration, as he said: "Good! and you are his daughter, and your words are heart-words, forged in the furnace of love."

They had been standing, these two, and Elsie had been totally unconscious of apparent discourtesy to the visitor; but suddenly perceiving her omission, and coloring with vexation, she exclaimed: "Pardon me! How thoughtless I am! Please forgive me, and sit down. Mr. Adolph, I entirely forgot you were standing."

"So did I," he rejoined; "so it shows I was not suffering, but I dare not stay at present." His eye suddenly caught sight of the shelves of books, and he uttered an exclamation of joy. "May I look at these, please, for an instant?

What a great privilege and happiness to have such a library!" He seemed fairly to gloat over the well-filled shelves.

"Father will be more than pleased to lend you any of these volumes you choose. If you see any one you fancy, just point it out, and I shall be so glad to have you take it home with you."

He did not seem to hear her, but in an instant turned round without speaking, with a rapt expression of countenance such as a devotee might wear gazing at a sacred shrine. At length he spoke slowly, his face half smiling now: "I am afraid you will think me foolish and fanciful; but I can hardly explain the peculiar effect the sight of that library had upon me. It seemed to take me back into a far past—into a life under somewhat different conditions; and these books seemed like old friends that I had once known. I heard your voice as if coming from a great distance, but could not on the instant break the spell that bound me. It is very strange. I have had some such impressions before, but never so profoundly as to-night. I heard your kind offer about lending me some of these precious volumes; yet your voice seemed to belong to a totally different world. But," he added, "this must appear very singular and eccentric to you. I fear I am very different from your other friends—other men, I mean."

"I am glad you are different, Mr. Adolph. I am thankful when I meet with one who is willing to appear frankly, as he or she is, without striving to be conventional."

"But the books, Miss Hastings"—thanking her, with his eyes as he spoke, for her remark, but not otherwise noticing it then. "What a feast you offer me! and I will express my gratitude by availing myself of your offer. May I have that, 'Great Thoughts of Great Thinkers,' on this upper shelf?" She opened the glass door, and put the volume in his hands.

"It is a very old book—at least fifty or sixty years, I should judge—but a great favorite of my father's."

He was already in the middle of the volume, scanning its contents eagerly.

"Miss Hastings, I feel as one awakening from a long, dreamy night, to whom the memory of a yesterday comes in flashes; but this yesterday is not part of my present span of years." He roused himself, as one would from a fast-gathering lethargy, and, closing the volume, held out his hand. "Good-night, dear friend; I dare not stay longer. This room seems to have haunting memories in it for me, and voices from another shore. Why it should be thus, I know not. One among the many other mysteries of this curious life, I suppose."

"The first, I hope, of many visits," she said, as she clasped his offered hand. "Thank you so much for coming; and your father, too—thank him for me."

With a deprecating smile and gesture, he passed into the darkness of the night; and the young lady sat down for a few moments to think over some matters which thronged surging through the conduits of her brain, and which had been suggested by the interview.

"Strange," she said at length, rising and lighting the small bed-room lamp which lay on the side-table—"strange indeed, this other life, which not merely follows this, but possibly antedates and surrounds it."

Not much sleep for her that night — a sort of fitful half-slumber, but with the curious phases of the waking day interwoven in weird fashion with the grotesque fancies of the night. The disheartening incidents of the trial, the strange proposal and statements of her cousin, and then the peculiar experience of Adolph in the library, all contributed their quota to make a night of disturbed visions.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A FRIEND IN NEED.

The third day of the civil suit, Liscomb *versus* Hastings, opened with a court-room crowded with eager, expectant people of both sexes. Though the verdict in the public mind was evidently made up, yet all were eager and curious to hear what the counsel for the defence would have to present against such overwhelming and conclusive evidence. When the case was called, Mr. St. Johns rose slowly to his feet, as if to begin his speech ; but, to the utter astonishment of nearly every one present, including the defendant himself, said, hesitatingly :

"Your honor, I have to request, as a special act of courtesy, that you will permit me to call another witness for the defence, before proceeding with my address."

"Preposterous ! " almost shouted the two opposing lawyers. "Your honor surely would not for a moment entertain such an extraordinary and unprecedented request," said Laycocks, angrily.

"The counsel for the defence must be aware that he stated last evening that all the evidence for the defence was in ; and the admission of new evidence at this late stage of the proceedings would be, not unprecedented, Mr. Laycocks, but certainly very unusual," said the judge : "nevertheless, if counsel can satisfy the court that the interests of justice would undoubtedly be subserved by such new evidence, why, in that case, the innovation may be permitted. Of course, Mr. Laycocks, you will have equal liberty to offer

rebuttal of such testimony, and to extend your address so as to cover the new ground."

Anthony Ferns, who had not been present when court opened, now entered, and, on being informed of the new move on the part of the defence, seemed almost frantic. Addressing the court, he denounced the whole proceeding in no measured terms—stigmatizing it as audacious, mean, dishonorable, and utterly contemptible, and urged vehemently that the court emphatically put the seal of disapprobation upon such dirty, underhand proceedings, by peremptorily refusing the request, and ordering the case to be continued in the usual manner followed in such courts.

"What is the nature of the evidence you propose to bring before the jury, at this late hour, Mr. St. Johns?" said the judge.

"It is utterly impossible, your honor, for me to answer that question without imperilling the very interests which we hope the new evidence will subserve. It is rather strange," he added, sarcastically, "that the prosecution should be so afraid of a little new evidence, when only yesterday they loftily declared that they stood upon the granite, and challenged the world to disprove their claim."

"We adhere to the statement, your honor, quoted by the counsellor; but, although having no fear of the new witness, whoever he may be, yet we do oppose this most unlegal-like proceeding, and the establishment of such a precedent in our courts, as to admit fresh testimony after the counsel had began pleading."

"Do you still press your point, Mr. St. Johns?" demanded the court.

"Most certainly I do, your honor, and if not granted shall make such refusal the basis for an appeal to a higher court," returned the counsel, who, although when Elsie had spoken at first of the new witness, he had declared it could not be done, and only yielded to her eager solicitations,

yet now excited by opposition was thoroughly aroused, and determined to carry his point at all hazards—not that he supposed the additional evidence would amount to anything, but he meant to gratify Elsie and annoy Ferns, whom he cordially detested, at one and the same time. So, after a little more wrangling, the prosecution suddenly withdrew their opposition, and the judge ordered the defence to bring on the new evidence.

"I'm half-ashamed of this blind business, which probably will result in nothing of any importance," whispered St. Johns to his colleague; "but it's something to make Ferns mad, anyhow;" then in a loud voice, "The new witness for the defence will please to take the stand."

A slight movement on the left of the bar, caused by two or three persons standing up, a figure moving with stately steps toward the witness-box, though a couple of lawyers who had risen to change their places intercepted for a moment the view, then Elsie almost screamed with astonishment as she saw the grave, reverend face of the Exile looking at her from the witness-stand. The venerable form, clad in a large blue fur-trimmed cloak of military pattern, appeared to singular advantage in that elevated position, while the countenance, framed in its wealth of snowy white hair and beard, had a dignity and repose which at once inspired both respect and confidence. An aged man—yes, probably much beyond the years ordinarily attained even by the elders of the race, but with a firmness and erectness of bearing and a freshness of complexion which showed that his natural force was not seriously abated. Taking the book tendered by the clerk, the new witness touched it with his lips, and then thanking the judge for the courtesy of an offered chair, seated himself, and turned toward Mr. St. Johns, who had risen for the purpose of questioning him.

"What is your name, my friend?" inquired the lawyer,

respectfully, satisfied that although his evidence might not be of much real value, yet the man before him was no ordinary witness. The witness hesitated an instant, while the court-room was hushed into a perfect stillness, and then in a clear, though slightly tremulous voice, answered:

"Nicholas Petrovitch."

Curiously people scanned him from every direction, as with the exception of perhaps three no one had seen him before—a stranger, and what was he doing in that witness box? Evidently, somebody or something was at fault. Just as St. Johns had risen, a slip of note-paper with a few words hurriedly written in pencil was put in his hand, and opening it his eye caught the words: "Ask the witness if he knew Nicholas Kuprianoff, and make the most of his answer." This was all, and the only clue he had, as to what the witness might possibly be able to testify to, so he now at once put the query:

"Did you know Nicholas Kuprianoff?"

"I did," promptly returned the witness.

"Were you familiar with his writing? Would you know his signature if you saw it?" asked the counsel, a single ray of light beginning to penetrate the darkness.

"Yes," responded the venerable man, with emphasis.

"Your honor, we demand that this deed, on which the prosecution base their claim, be submitted to the witness."

The judge looked at the opposing counsel interrogatively; but, ere he could speak, Ferns promptly responded: "Certainly, your honor, we are willing, although we protest against this whole proceeding as extremely irregular, and tending uselessly to protract the trial—quite willing to submit the deed to the inspection of a thousand witnesses, if necessary, without the slightest fear of the result," at the same time passing the document to St. Johns.

That gentleman, after quickly scanning it, handed it to the witness, who eagerly, as it seemed to the spectators, took

it from the counsel, and at once began to read it. Pausing for a moment to allow the witness time to examine the instrument, the lawyer proceeded :

"Mr. Petrovitch, will you carefully look at the principal signature there, written Nicholas Kuprianoff, and say if it is really the signature of your friend."

The witness scrutinized it, as if he was minutely examining each letter, while Elsie felt her head swim ; and the interest in the room grew almost to fever heat. At length, the voice of the witness broke the suspense, and all felt that he was speaking his profound conviction.

"It is undoubtedly the signature of Nicholas Kuprianoff."

It came reluctantly ; but the words, though low, were fearfully distinct to one at least, and struck like a rising knell upon her heart. St. Johns sat down suddenly, but immediately rose again as he met the triumphant glance of Anthony Ferns, and heard him say, in a low, mocking tone : "Many thanks, St. Johns, for helping us along."

In sheer desperation, the counsel asked again : "Did you ever see that deed before ?"

"Yes."

"When ?"

"Fifty-three years ago, when it was executed," came promptly.

Like the drowning man with the straw, the lawyer pushed on, asking almost at random, and yet half-afraid at any moment of getting out of the frying-pan into the fire.

"Who was present besides yourself ?"

"I object," said Ferns—"but no, go on ; you will only hang yourself."

The witness paused, as if thinking.

"The two witnesses whose names are appended here, and the gentleman who bought the property."

"And his name was ?" And the voice of the speaker trembled as he spoke.

The witness answered, in a voice which was heard everywhere, "Thomas Whitely."

A low hum of astonishment went through the room, and the opposing counsel began to show signs of uneasiness.

"Then I understand you to say that on the occasion referred to, there were present yourself, the two witnesses whose names are written there, Elias Stroub and George Gayling, Thomas Whitely and Nicholas Kuprianoff?"

"Yes," said the witness.

"You swear that only these persons were present, and no others?" urged the counsel, with a barely concealed gleam of exultation in his eye.

"I do."

"Once more. Is that the deed, the very instrument, in all its details, as you saw it on that occasion?"

"This is really growing to be farcical, your honor," said Mr. Laycocks, rising hastily. "As if any mere witness could be supposed to be able to answer such a question truthfully, after the lapse of over fifty years! I hope your honor will see the necessity of closing this comedy, before it degenerates into a farce."

"The counsel will please confine himself to essentials, and only put questions directly bearing on the case," said the judge.

"I will, your honor; and this is one of them. I repeat my question, 'Is this deed the same in all respects as the one you saw executed?'"

"No," said the witness, "it is not exactly the same."

"In what respects does it differ from the instrument you saw executed?"

"It is the same instrument, with the exception of the date and the name of the purchaser of the estate," replied the old man, very slowly, as if he was becoming weary.

"The date is one year earlier, exactly, and I find here the name of Thomas Liscomb, instead of Thomas Whitely,

which was the original. In short, this is the original deed with the exception of the date of the year, and the word Liscomb which are—" and here the glistening eyes were turned full upon the plaintiff, who sat near, and his words sounded with terrible distinctness in the hush of the waiting crowd—"are *forgeries.*"

It would be impossible to describe the sensation produced by these simple words. The more impulsive of the audience rose to their feet, and for a moment or two everything was confusion. Elsie, whose nerves had been strung to the highest pitch, and suffering too from want of sleep, suddenly exclaimed : "Oh, father," and fell back pale and speechless. Mr. Hastings called on someone near to open the window close to them ; and those around, seeing that a lady had fainted, hastened to move so that she could be carried out of doors ; but she almost immediately revived and insisted on keeping her seat. "Father, I am ashamed of myself. I never fainted before, did I?"

"No, my dear, you are not of the fainting kind" he answered ; "but hush ! St. Johns is beginning again."

During the little commotion caused by his words, the grand old man had sat in the witness box, like a very Jove come down to calm the tempestuous passions of mortals, and apparently rather surprised at the effect he had produced. The deed had been held by the witness since being handed to him by the counsel, and it had been noticed that from time to time he had been carefully examining certain parts of it with what appeared to be a magnifying glass, which he had taken from his pocket. The counsel for the prosecution had demanded the return of the instrument, after the witness had first examined it, but he so strenuously insisted on retaining it during his stay in the witness box that the judge had granted his desire.

"You swear that to your own personal knowledge and belief that is the original deed executed in favor of Thomas

Whitely by Nicholas Kuprianoff, that the signatures thereon inscribed are genuine and were written under your own personal observation. But you further swear that the words, 'Thomas Whitely,' wheresoever appearing in the document, have been erased, and the words 'Thomas Liscomb' inserted instead; and also that the year date has been altered in a similar way?"

"I do," replied the witness, "with the exception of the word *Thomas*, which remains the same as it appeared originally, and has not, so far as I can detect, been meddled with."

"Your honor, that is all we wish to ask of this witness at present, but the court can easily see that, as the evidence just given has changed the aspect of the case considerably, it may be necessary to ask further testimony from this witness, and also to call on others to strengthen his position."

"I am to consider the *witness* so called, is then at my disposal," said Anthony Ferns, rising, with a gleam of savage intention in his countenance, as if he would devour the aged man on the stand, as a wolf might rend a sheep. Indeed, so vindictive did the senior counsel for the plaintiff look, that the Patriarch seemed to rather shrink from the encounter, and turning toward the judge said, wearily, and in a tone that had in it more of the tremor of age than noticed before.

"May it please the court, I am much fatigued, for this has been a severe tax on my endurance."

The pleading look and truly dignified and venerable aspect of the speaker seemed to make a marked impression, which the judge evidently shared, for he at once said: "You shall not be harassed, my friend. Mr. Ferns, please make your questioning as brief and to the point as possible."

The lawyer glared angrily at the speaker, but his wrath was impotent, as he well knew, with Judge Temple.

"It is indeed hard if I am to be limited in my rights as counsel for the prosecution, when such unprecedented privileges have been freely conceded to the opposition. Gentlemen of the jury, I hope you will notice and remember the barefaced imposition which we have been forced to yield to this morning. The defence in their dire extremity, in their death-struggle to maintain their hold on ill-gotten possessions which are fast slipping from their iniquitous grasp have, from nobody knows where, suborned this old man to come here and perjure himself in their interests."

Here the judge peremptorily rapped the desk and said: "If the counsel is making his final address to the jury, and does not wish to ask the witness any questions, he may retire."

"I beg pardon, your honor, but the iniquity of this whole proceeding is so heinous and transparent, that my natural indignation prevailed." Then turning to the witness. "You claim that you have seen that deed before, and were present at the making and signing of it?"

"Yes," replied the witness, simply, "I do."

"Remember you are on your oath. Do you pretend to swear that after fifty years you know that to be the exact deed you say you saw? How do you know that this is not another deed like it, executed and signed a year later, as you say the date shows?"

The old man did not seem to notice the imperious manner of the other, but, looking at his questioner with a half-smile on his time-wise face, replied, "I know that the word Liscomb, wherever it appears in this deed, and the date of the year are not as originally written, and not in the handwriting of Nicholas Kuprianoff."

"You are so old that you have lost your memory and are in your dotage, old man," said the lawyer, impatiently. "Please tell the jury how you know these wonderful things,"

he said with a sneer, but with a manifest uneasiness which could not be concealed.

The aged witness's eyes flashed, and he drew himself up with dignity, saying, "I would not answer you, you foul-mouthed pettifogger, only that the interests of those infinitely superior to yourself are at stake." This was uttered in a low tone, yet so distinctly as to be heard all over the room. The witness then went on: "Nicholas Kuprianoff, as his custom was, in filling up and signing this deed, first wrote the words in with a colorless solution, which, sinking into the parchment, left no sign, but which, once written, could never be erased; then he wrote the same words with common ink over."

"Stop!" thundered the counsel, "you are not asked to give your fancies here. Just answer my question, Yes or No."

"Mr. Ferns, the witness is answering your question as to how he knows this to be the same deed. Proceed, Mr. Petrovitch."

Ferns' cheek paled and reddened by turns, and the interest of everyone present was, if possible, intensified. The witness continued, although with visible effort, recapitulating in part what he had said about the writing, as if afraid he might be misunderstood, and then quietly saying, "I am tired, and must rest for a few moments to collect my thoughts," leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes.

At that moment Elsie saw a tall, manly figure making his way toward the witness-box; the form appeared familiar, but the face was away from her; but a feeling of pleasure thrilled her whole being as, presently, she saw Adolph bending tenderly over his father and grasping his hand. Her first impulse had been to go to the Patriarch herself; but on second thought she checked the impulse, remembering in time that it would not probably be his desire to be noticed by her, there. Adolph seemed to be urging his father to

retire for a while and rest, but the old man declined, saying, so as to be heard by several, "No, no ; I would rather finish this at once than return again."

Mr. St. Johns was looking very cheerful, and feeling so, too, for the events of the last two hours had changed the entire atmosphere of the trial to him. He was busy writing, and started when an abrupt whisper reached his ear. Looking up, he saw a neat, trim-looking gentleman, of medium height and a very professional air, standing beside him and regarding him earnestly. The conversation which followed was only heard by themselves, but it was noticed when it ceased that the professional-looking person went over to that part of the room where the venerable-looking Arthur Liscomb was and sat down near him.

After resting a few moments, the witness signified his readiness to continue his evidence. Ferns, who had been engaged in close conversation with his partner, now rose, and at once addressing the witness, said : "You swore, a while back, that you were present when that instrument was prepared and signed ; if so, where is your proof of your presence on that occasion, since all the parties subscribing to the deed, and whose names appear there, have been dead nearly a quarter of a century? How is it," he continued, triumphantly, as the witness seemed unwilling to answer promptly, "that if you were present and saw all these wonderful things, of special solutions, etc., that your name does not appear on that parchment as a witness? Answer me that, old man !"

The witness certainly did seem to shrink from answering, but finally, as if after an internal struggle with himself, answered, decisively, in a low tone, "My name is on the deed."

"What !" ejaculated the counsel, in a tone that seemed to shake the building, "do you mean to tell the court that your name is on that instrument? Please point it out—some more of your precious solutions, I suppose."

"My name," was the answer, "is on this instrument in black and white."

Amazement sat on every countenance, and the majority of those present felt that the poor old gentleman was in his dotage, and ought not to be badgered in the witness-box any longer. This evidently was Counsellor Ferns' opinion, for, turning to the judge, he exclaimed in a disgusted tone: "It is too bad to waste the time of the court by bringing before it this doting witness; yet, if your honor is content to listen to such senile ravings and drivelling nonsense, I will ask him a few more questions, just to show the condition of the old man's mind."

"How dare he talk that way!" whispered Elsie to her father, indignantly. "I wonder the judge allows it."

"I am afraid the old gentleman is wandering somewhat in his mind, Elsie," answered Mr. Hastings, rather sorrowfully.

"You say your name is on that deed in black and white; then, of course, you have risen from the grave. Will you please inform the court and jury, and these anxious legal gentlemen here, which of the four dead men whose names are affixed to that deed you are; and also why, in coming back to 'revisit the glimpses of the moon,' you have chosen to adopt the name of Nicholas Petrovitch?" said the counsel, banteringly, his anxiety all gone and now feeling comparatively sure of his ground.

"I am returned from the tomb to confront a vile conspiracy and foil the conspirators," returned the aged witness, solemnly.

So dignified, grave, and serious was the demeanor of the speaker, coupled with his advanced age, that a sort of glamour of superstition seemed to fall upon the audience as he spoke, and several faces visibly paled.

"I must really congratulate my learned brothers here on their spiritualistic or necromantic power, whichever it may

be, in restoring the dead to life," said the lawyer, bowing to the counsel for the defence, with an ironical smile. Then, turning to the witness, "A truce to this nonsense, my old friend. Which of these dead men are you? What do you say is your real name?"

The Patriarch rose from his chair, and stepping forward in the hush of that crowded court-room, in a clear voice, which came to the ear like the trumpet-tones of fate, said, "I am Nicholas Kuprianoff himself."

For a full minute all sat in a sort of stupefied wonderment, gazing at the ancient man, who continued standing, then a reaction ensued, and a great shout went up from the assembled crowd. It was a shout of very mixed and varied nature—astonishment, delight, ridicule, incredulity, all found voice in that cry, and for some moments business was necessarily suspended. Then, with a loud, mocking laugh, Ferns, who, at first, on hearing the witness' extraordinary announcement, had dropped into his chair as if shot, and as one closely observing him said, "as pale as a ghost," rose to his feet, saying:

"A patriarch, indeed, to whom Methuselah is an infant! Really, my ancient sir, you must be pretty well flavored with antiquity. Will your antiquated reverence please to inform the court how old you were when you claim to have executed that deed?"

"I decline to answer," said the witness, apparently somewhat annoyed by the tone of the other.

"Your honor, we can prove that at the period referred to Nicholas Kuprianoff was, in popular estimation, an old man, and was called such by his associates, so that, in the very nature of things, he cannot be living at present on the earth, unless the days of miracles have returned."

"The question is reasonable. The witness will please answer," said the judge, gently looking toward the white-haired deponent.

"I was at that time sixty-seven years of age," answered the witness, quietly.

"Then, in the Devil's name, how old do you call yourself now?" blurted out the counsel, rudely.

There was no mistaking the words as they fell from the lips of the aged speaker on the overstrained attention of the hearers: "One hundred and twenty years, on my last birthday."

A derisive laugh went up from the audience, but only from the thoughtless ones. A minority present felt awed and impressed by the manner and words of this venerable man, who certainly bore the marks of great age, however improbable or impossible might his own statement be in reference to it. There was a whispered consultation between the lawyers of the respective sides, and then Mr. Laycocks rose.

"I suggest, your honor, that the testimony of this last witness be stricken from the record, as his mental condition certainly precludes his evidence being accepted."

"By no means," exclaimed the senior counsel on the other side, rising hastily. "Although we admit that, on the surface, things look a little improbable, yet, considering that the preceding testimony of the witness has been given in a singularly clear and lucid manner, and that, although rarely, yet men have attained to as great an age, and even greater than that claimed by this witness—Thomas Parr, for instance, who, on good evidence, reached the age of one hundred and fifty years, and several others, even in our own century, who have attained ages long past the hundred—we insist on the evidence of this witness being received, and are willing to submit it to any test deemed necessary by the court."

"It is for the plaintiff to rebut any testimony which has been submitted this morning, or to disprove the statements of the witness regarding his identity," said the judge.

"Do you wish to examine the witness any further at present, Mr. Ferns?" asked St. Johns.

"No!" shortly returned that gentleman.

"Then I will ask a question or two. Mr. Witness, why did you give your name as Nicholas Petrovitch, if it was really Nicholas Kuprianoff?" said St. Johns.

"Because my father's name was Peter, and Petrovitch means the son of Peter in the Russian language; and by that name I was called until I came to this country, when I changed it to Kuprianoff at the request of a relative who left me some property, and also for certain political reasons, which it is not necessary here to disclose."

"Very good. Now, you said that the solution used by you in writing primarily the names on that deed enabled you to detect the forgery. Will you please explain?"

"It is very simple. I am a chemist, and through my technical knowledge in this branch was able to make a solution which, colorless in itself, yet in contact with animal or vegetable fibre, and exposed to the sunlight for a short time, gives a pale-gray tint, so faint, however, that it may require a strong magnifying glass, such as I hold in my hand, to detect. It incorporates itself into the texture of parchment, forming chemical union with it, and is absolutely indestructible. The common ink can be easily removed over such writing, but the words written in this solution remain as long as the material on which it is written exists. Take this magnifier and judge for yourself."

St. Johns took the deed and eye-glass from the speaker, and proceeded with considerable curiosity to examine the words characterized as *forged* by the aged witness.

"Give me that instrument—that is our property, and is too valuable to be handed about in this way, and perhaps iniquitously tampered with," said Ferns, moving toward St. Johns, and attempting to take the document from his hands.

"Hold!" said the judge; "that document has been put in evidence, and introduced into this court as a witness, and as such can be examined and cross-examined as far as the court deems necessary in the interests of justice. Proceed with your scrutiny, counsellor."

The baffled attorney slunk back to his seat, looking like a hyena balked of its prey.

"I fail to see anything but the name written here in black ink," said St. Johns, at length, in a disappointed tone.

"Hold the parchment so that the sun's rays will fall directly upon the line. Then, too, I omitted to mention that the words written in the solution slope from left to right, or backhanded, as you term it."

"Yes, yes—I see it now," shouted the counsel. "Thomas Whitely comes out distinctly. Why, this is indeed wonderful—a miracle in the interests of justice." Yes, there, under the revealing glass, came out, in a delicate gray, the words mentioned, and the same held good with regard to all the writing on the parchment, showing clearly where erasure and substitution had been made. "Will your honor please satisfy yourself of what I saw, and then allow the jury to see for themselves the direct evidence of the most audacious attempt at fraud that has ever been attempted in this or any other court?"

"Will you? No, you don't!" exclaimed a loud voice, and all eyes were immediately directed to the plaintiff's corner of the room, whence the voice came, and there it was noticed that the professional-looking gentleman before mentioned had a firm hold on the venerable Liscomb's collar, and seemed to be strenuously opposing his escape from the room.

"Mr. Sheriff, bring those two persons creating this unseemly disturbance before the court." This was accordingly done, with some difficulty, as the old man resisted violently. "What do you mean by arresting this man in the

court-room in this way? Where is your authority?" said his honor, severely regarding the professional-looking person.

"Your honor," said St. Johns, coming forward, "this gentleman is following out my instructions, which were, in case the evidence seemed to justify it, to prevent any attempted escape of this man from the court-room. You will see that this magistrate's warrant is correct, and I think your honor will allow that the revelations of the last hour fully justify our action."

"You are in this warrant charged with conspiracy, Arthur Liscomb, and will have to remain in the custody of the officer until legally released."

Ferns and Laycock had not been by any means passive spectators of this scene, and blustered and threatened as to the revenge they would take for this outrage; but in vain. The attempt of the plaintiff to escape from the room gave a bad color to his case, and the wily lawyers felt this keenly. The judge ordered the trial to go on.

"Now that the jury has examined this deed, and seen the glaring nature of the forgery, we will proceed to identify our witness, in order to save the other side the trouble," said St. Johns.

From a list in his hand the counsel called on four witnesses successively, old men, who swore distinctly that they identified the witness, although they had not seen him for over fifty years, and supposed him dead long ago. Their evidence was pointed and positive and was not practically altered by Ferns' brow-beating questioning. The fifth witness, however, was a Russian, and he swore that he had known of Kuprianoff's existence during all this time, and that his great age was an undoubted fact. Then the lawyer, by permission of the judge, asked all in the room who recognized the ancient man to rise to their feet, and at least a dozen gray-haired men, most of them looking nearly, if not quite,

as old as the witness, stood up promptly. It was evident that the prosecution had no case, and although Ferns made a fierce tirade to the jury, ending by threatening all sorts of legal reprisals, it was plain that the jury were decided. St. Johns simply said that he rejoiced that Divine Providence had spared this noble patriarch to be able to vindicate his own memory from the foul aspersions which had been cast upon it, and the infamous charge that he had fraudulently deeded the Hermitage twice. "I make no speech, leaving the evidence with you, gentlemen, knowing that your good sense will give us a unanimous verdict."

After a short charge from the judge, the jury, through their foreman, cast their verdict in favor of the defence without leaving their seats. Popular opinion, which twenty-four hours previously had seemed to point very decidedly in favor of the venerable plaintiff, now had completely veered around, and the verdict was received with a storm of approval against which the dignity of the judge and the court-officers labored in vain. After a semblance of quiet was obtained, the usual forms were gone through, and court adjourned. Then ensued a wild commotion, resulting from the eager desire of the people to personally congratulate Mr. Hastings. All petty grievances were forgotten, and he was only remembered as the honest man, kind neighbor, and high-minded gentleman. Elsie, too, came in for a full share of the congratulations, for she was extremely popular, and many a little grudge entertained against the inflexible magistrate had been mollified or entirely removed by the kind word or smile of his daughter. For herself she had but one desire when court closed and she could disengage herself from the circle of friendly faces and clasping hands, and that was to seek the dear old man to whom they owed so much, and thank him. Her full, grateful heart longed to disburden itself, and she felt that a touch of the hand from this sage of another century would be a bene-

diction. Alas! he had disappeared; no one seemed to know how or when, but he was gone. She met St. Johns, who was on the same quest, apparently, for his salutation was:

"How glorious! Let me congratulate you, my dear child. But where is that splendid specimen of ancient manhood? I have not quite got over it. It seems like a veritable resurrection, doesn't it? Have you seen him? He saved us at the eleventh hour!"

Just then his eye fell on the crest-fallen-looking plaintiff, to whom the professional-looking person was sticking like grim death. His counsel had deserted him, and he looked doleful enough. "Ha, ha! I must attend to that rascal, and have him properly committed for one of the vilest conspiracies ever concocted by a band of ruffians. I believe this old scoundrel is only the weak tool of sharper knaves, and if I could see my way clearly I would have those two 'divil's limbs of the law,' as I heard an Irishman just now call them, indicted with him as co-conspirators, as I believe they are."

In a few moments the active lawyer had the satisfaction of seeing the late plaintiff in the civil suit of Liscomb *vs.* Hastings marched off under the guardianship of the professional-looking person and another detective, en route for Melville jail.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### A NOCTURNAL SURPRISE.

So the big trial was over, and the inmates of the Hermitage felt like taking out, as it were, a new lease of life. Their beautiful home, for a time in such serious jeopardy, now in a sense seemed more their own than ever, if that were possible. Mr. Hastings had invited home to dinner a number of friends, so a sort of jubilee party had been held in the hospitable mansion on the evening of the trial, and a very delightful gathering it was. The theme of all was the wonderful old man, and much curiosity was manifested to know where he had been living all these long years. The host and his daughter had to skilfully fence many direct questions from those who suspected that his existence and whereabouts had been all the time known to them. And now, on the morning after the exciting day, the father and daughter were in the cosey library, indulging in a delightful talk all to themselves.

"Oh, father, to think that the Patriarch should turn out to be the old, old man who laid out this place and built the house. It seems to me like a dream."

"Facts are often more strange than fiction, my dear, and his wonderful age and preservation are truly marvellous; but I suspect there are many such instances, if we only knew them. A good many are on record of men attaining many years over the century, and the statements concerning the phenomenal age of Thomas Parr cited by Mr. St. Johns have never been disproved."

"I found a sketch of his life in your work of 'Universal Biography,' father, and they say he was born in the year 1483 and died in 1635, making him one hundred and fifty-two years of age. It fairly took away my breath when I read it. How I long to see Mr. Kuprianoff again! He will be grander than ever, and it almost seems to me that I can't possibly be as familiar with him as before."

"We must certainly take a very early opportunity of visiting the Cave and thanking him for what he has done for us. St. Johns acknowledges that there was not a shadow of hope outside of this unexpected aid which he so opportunely brought. Perhaps we can go to-morrow; but I forgot, your cousin Seaman will be home to-morrow, and Ellen will need your help and counsel in a score of things to start house-keeping; however we will decide on a day."

"Do let it be soon, father—I feel as if I could not rest until I see him again," answered Elsie, as she kissed her father for the sixth time that morning, she felt so joyful, and disappeared to attend to some house-keeping problem.

A week later and Elsie had tried in vain to find an opportunity to revisit the inmates of the Cave. Ellen and Dr. Seaman seemed to need her so much in their efforts to start their home that she could not find it in her heart to abandon them even for a day. Ellen relied on her so implicitly, having little knowledge of the practical side of life in the new country, and under her tutelage improved so fast that Elsie was really delighted to help her. Her cousin was indeed amazed at the accounts which he received of the trial, and his enthusiasm about the "primeval man," as he called him, even exceeded hers. He was determined to see him, if he had to advertise for him as stolen or strayed, he declared, and half hinted that she knew more of him than she pretended. Indeed, from one or two casual remarks dropped by Elsie, Warren drew certain conclusions which he determined to verify on the first op-

portunity. As said, a full week had passed and the Cave unvisited, and the big burden of gratitude weighing on Elsie's warm heart still remained unlightened. She did not expect to say much when she met the "auld one," as she remembered, with a smile, the unreverential Hiram had called him, for she knew he would not permit any fervid expression of thanks, but to press his hand would, she knew, tell him all she felt, even if she uttered no word, for he certainly could read her thoughts as no one in mortal form had ever done before. However, the young couple were pretty well settled at last, and practice already had begun to seek the new doctor.

"At last I feel as if I could say the day was my own," she said in the afternoon, having paid a visit to Ellen in the morning to hold a consultation about some special curtains for Warren's surgery.

"A note, Miss Elsie, came while you was away. That queer fellow brought it."

Eagerly opening the missive, she read in pencil :

Wish much to see you, but wait until you hear further. Will communicate with you very soon, possibly this evening.

Your loving old friend,

NICHOLAS KUPRIANOFF.

Elsie was both pleased and vexed to receive this note. Vexed because she had half decided to persuade her father to visit the Cave the following morning, and now she might not see her old friend so soon. However, she was glad to hear from him ; and to see the careful, just a little unsteady, chirography was a joy.

"Probably Mr. Adolph will come to-night," she said to herself, and perhaps the thought suggested the rather more careful toilet than usual, for despite herself she found her mental eyes wandering frequently, of late, to that grave, patient face with the soft brown eyes. That countenance in

which the masculine and feminine qualities seemed so harmoniously and equally blended. From constant association with her father, perhaps it was that Elsie had an almost manly contempt for elaborate toilets. To spend more than an hour in her dressing-room she would have regarded as a shameful sacrifice of valuable time. She wisely preferred to spend the time in healthful exercise in the pure air out-of-doors, gathering color and glow and physical beauty from the fountain-head. Her father had impressed upon her, again and again, that the true source of beauty was health, and having this, a simple garb would be infinitely more becoming and attractive than the most superb garments and ornaments upon a feeble, sickly frame. Father and daughter were wonderfully alike in their tastes ; not to be wondered at, perhaps, after all, when one came to realize how very intimate had been the lives of these two. For after his wife's death the little motherless one was his only thought and care. She it was who made life precious to him, and she was rarely absent from his waking thoughts.

Elsie was reading to her father, an exercise both keenly enjoyed, and now and then pausing to listen to his comments or explanations. It was about ten o'clock, and the night was dark with that soft gathering and enfolding blackness which sometimes seems to close in on one like a fog, and yet warm and pleasant as the touch of a rich fur garment. The young lady was just about to commence a new chapter, as they finished their discussion of the most striking features in the one just concluded (an excellent practice always followed by these companions), when a clear, low voice was distinctly heard in the room on the shadowed side farthest from the reading-table.

"May an old friend come forward to the light?"

The room was entirely in the shade, with the exception of the light-circle from the shaded lamp on the study-table, in which circle the two sat. Both started up somewhat

confused, at first, as to where the speaker actually stood, although recognizing the voice.

"Oh, yes," exclaimed both at once, and immediately out of the dark—evolved as it were from cloud-land—came the venerable form of the "Patriarch." Instantly father and daughter sprung forward joyfully, each clasping one of the extended hands.

"Welcome a thousand times to our home!" warmly exclaimed Mr. Hastings.

"I almost feared my abrupt intrusion was untimely," said the aged visitor, as he kissed Elsie first on one cheek and then on the other, "but circumstances rendered it necessary to come almost like a thief in the night," he continued, smiling.

"Father, hadn't I better tell the servants not to sit up any longer, as perhaps our friend would that his visit be kept secret?" said Elsie.

"My dear child, I would much prefer that my coming here should be unknown, if you can so arrange it," returned the Patriarch, before Mr. Hastings could reply.

"We can easily manage that. Just tell Mrs. Wagram that we wish to be entirely alone to-night."

"Why, father, Mrs. Wagram isn't here to-night, and has been away a great deal lately. Something outside seems to worry her very much, and she asked as a special favor that I would allow her freedom this month to come and go as she wished, and she has been so very faithful that I agreed to it without consulting you. I hope I did not do wrong."

"Not at all, my dear; I leave such things to your own discretion. But, my dear sir, you are surely not alone?"

The old man smiled, and said, softly: "Adolph," and another form came out of the shadows, saying, "I, too, would come from the darkness to the light and meet our dear friends once more," and as the latest arrival took their hands in greeting, his father observed, quietly: "While

not burglariously inclined, yet our entrance to-night into this home savors not a little of the ways of those gentlemen."

"By night or by day, by door or window, by ways canny or uncanny, my home is open to you both whenever it shall please you to come," said the host, earnestly.

Elsie, who had left the room to inform the servants as her father began speaking, now returned, having met one of the girls on her way to the library.

The ancient man, who seemed to be deeply impressed by his surroundings, even more so, Elsie thought, than Adolph had been on the former occasion, said, in a voice which trembled somewhat:

"To revisit my old home and receive such kind welcome touches me deeply. I thank you much."

"Yes, your old home. Why, you built the house and laid out the grounds, did you not? How strange, how wonderful it all is. And we thought you had died ever so long ago," fervently exclaimed the young lady.

"Yes, my dear, I built this house, and our appearance here to-night proves that it has some secrets which have not as yet been revealed to you."

"Why," said Mr. Hastings, with a peculiar look, "did you not come in the usual way, by the road. I confess you did startle me on hearing your voice, and more so on seeing you come forward from that side of the room, but concluded that you must have arrived while we were reading, and so entered unperceived. Yet I own it puzzled me to know how you could so effectually elude our vigilance."

The Patriarch smiled, saying: "We neither came by the road nor entered by the window, and so your watchfulness and alertness were not at fault in any degree whatever. We took the liberty of entering your home by a door you never suspected, and came hither by a road untrodden for long, long years." Again the weird, creeping feeling, as if

a supernatural something were hovering near, came over one of the listeners, and Elsie's pulses seemed to congeal into frigidity as she gazed on this curious old man. He continued, after a brief pause, as was his wont, resting from time to time, as Elsie had often noticed before, as if continued speaking exhausted him: "Dear friends, forgive us, but it seemed best to come thus, and we took all precaution to avoid giving you hurtful or needless alarm. We came to-night by a secret passage leading from the Cave to this very room."

"Impossible!" exclaimed both father and daughter together; and the former looked both astonished and alarmed. "A secret passage leading into my house, and I living here for twenty-seven years, nearly, and not know of its existence! Can it be really so?"

"Yes; our being here is one proof, certainly, and I can speedily convince you. The passage is a subterranean one formed by Nature's own hand, and its discovery, and subsequently the Cave to which it led, was the cause of my building the house on this particular spot. You are aware, from what I have narrated elsewhere, that at one period a large price was put on my head by the Russian Government, and not knowing what contingency might arise, I resolved to utilize this discovery of the Cave, and provide a secure refuge in case of especial peril." And the aged speaker again rested, leaning back in the large comfortable arm-chair which his host had insisted on his occupying.

"Father feels the effect of long-continued exertion of any kind at his great age, of course, but he speedily recruits," remarked the son, who sat by affectionately regarding the venerable man.

"But this secret passage," rejoined Mr. Hastings, "confounds and confuses me. How long is it? Why, it must be several miles at least, and how ever could your father

bear the fatigue of such a journey; and then about the ventilation, the air must be very bad."

"Only two miles long, Mr. Hastings," answered the old man, with a smile, as he opened his eyes; "and as to the ventilation, why, there are a number of places where it communicates with the outer air. I did not feel the fatigue as much as I expected, and almost nothing of it now. Remember I was a mountaineer during a portion of my early life, and was inured to fatigue. I was called a famous walker. But I was speaking of the troublous times of half a century ago, and beyond. After erecting this mansion, I had this passage cleared out, and free, easy communication established between the Cave and this room, as said before. After a few years of quiet, philosophic existence here with my one servant, who was devoted to me, having followed me to this country from my native province, and my beloved child, changes came. My boy died, and later on I unwittingly drew the attention of the Russian Government, and a determined effort was made to extradite me and take me to St. Petersburg on a charge of sedition and murder. I received prompt warning from a friend, and at once took steps to retire from public notice. I resolved to sell the property and retire to the Cave, where I was fairly certain of being secure from molestation. I disposed of the property to Mr. Whitely, and subsequently you became proprietor. Nobody excepting a few close personal friends knew of my existence, and I died to public interest. I travelled about the country, from time to time, disguised, in connection with the Order, doing effective work against the tyrants who enslaved my native land; but my journeying was mostly at night. It was on one of these journeys that I found my boy. Yes, about thirty years since the great blessing came into my life of meeting my child, reincarnated—a healthy, strong lad of some eight or ten summers. Smile if you please, my dear

friend, but to me it is a profound fact which I accept as I do the conviction of immortality," and the venerable visitor paused a moment, giving Mr. Hastings opportunity to say:

"I merely smiled to think how such a faith, which I assure you is beautiful and interesting to me, would be viewed by the world."

"The world's thought and opinion weighs less than the dust of the balance in comparison with yours, my dear sir, or that of the beloved child here. A word more and I cease. My son's early life had been sacrificed by undue attention to and cultivation of the mental nature, and I now resolved that the training of the physical—the development of his body—should take precedence over every other consideration, and so he has grown up largely a child of nature, as you see him to-day," and the old man looked fondly at the fine specimen of physical manhood beside him. "These are the few necessary links in the chain of my life, which I deemed it best you should know, so as to be able to make a just estimate of the whole."

"And a most interesting recital it has been," said the host; "and now let me, in my daughter's name and my own, thank you most sincerely for the heroic kindness which induced you, at your great age, to leave your obscurity and face the vexatious and severe ordeal of the witness-stand on our behalf. You saved our property for us, and no words can express our obligation," said the gentleman, clasping the hand of his aged visitor warmly.

"Yes, indeed, and I feel it as much as father. It was a noble self-denying act, and my heart ached when I heard that brutal lawyer badger you as he did by his rude questions," added Elsie, her whole countenance glowing with the emotion she felt.

"My dear friends, you must not talk so, it really distresses me. It was a responsibility laid upon me—a para-

mount duty as well as a pleasure—to come to your aid against those sons of evil. 'No obligations between friends,' is an old saying of my country. So now while I am resting, Adolph will tell you why we chose this peculiar way of coming, and also why we selected this late hour."

Thus called on, the younger visitor told them that in some way or other the Russian government had discovered that Ivan had taken refuge in this country, and was in the neighborhood of Melville. Some evil-disposed person had informed the Russian diplomatic office at Washington, and already two detectives were in the vicinity and on the watch. "Suspicion has been directed to the region of the cave's entrance by which you visited us, and so we decided it would be prudent to avoid using that mode of reaching our underground dwelling for the present. So father decided that to-night we would reveal to you this new mode of reaching us and we you. But of course, so long, at least, as our friend Ivan is in danger, it will, as you understand, I am sure, be necessary to keep the secret among ourselves, and guard it religiously from outsiders."

"Which caution," interposed the old gentleman, suddenly, "would not be necessary if the true relation existed between servants and their employers. Then each member of a household, be he servitor or served, would be unswerving in his fidelity to the family or house, and feel that the interest of one was the interest of all. Something of the spirit which prevails among the clans of the Scotch Highlands, where each member is proud of being a clansman—the humblest shepherd this—the proudest chief no more, and in this sense they have a common interest, a mutual purpose, and each can call the other brother. But I interrupt," he said, with that genial smile which so charmed Elsie, "and my excuse must be the deep interest which I have always taken in these subjects. My time now must be very short indeed, and so I cannot hope to see what cer-

tainly some of you will—the true fraternal relation established between employers and employés, when the former will act as the parent or chief, willing and anxious to share all good, material or otherwise, in fair proportion with those whose labor earns it, and when the workers will give a heart-prompted, faithful, conscientious service in return."

"As time grows late," said Adolph, when his father ceased speaking, "just let me say that whenever you can find time to honor our poor cave home with your presence, giving notice to Hiram will insure our attendance here to conduct you by the new road."

"Right from this room?" exclaimed Elsie, with almost childish glee.

"Yes," returned the gentleman, "and now, father, suppose we retire, and in so doing show our friends the secret panel."

The aged man arose, and placing his arm in that of the host, moved forward in the direction of the alcove which formed the base of the L shaped library. At the extreme end of this alcove or recess, which was about fifteen feet long and perhaps eight wide, fitted with book shelves on both sides, there was a very elaborately carved solid oak panel occupying the entire space laterally, and in height about six feet. It was a beautiful piece of wood-work, and was always shown to visitors as being a very rare and valuable work of old-time skill. Mr. Hastings had, at his visitor's suggestion, brought the lamp in his hand, and Adolph, who with Elsie had followed their elders, now lighted a dark lantern which he had with him, and threw a strong light upon the panel. The dwellers in the mansion looked on with a curiosity which was intensely keen, to see what would happen next. The centre of the panel, a space about three feet square was exquisitely engraved and colored in the wood, the subject being a battle-field of the olden time. This, as contrasted with the surrounding part, cut in *basso-*

*relievo*, produced an admirable effect as a picture in a frame.

"That is a gem of art," said Mr. Hastings, "and some time I must ask you for its history. I never saw anything just like it in all my travelling."

"It is an old style, and was done for me by an artistic genius who died in Siberia," replied the old man, a dark cloud passing over his face, "another victim of tyranny and wrong."

At a sign from the "Patriarch," Adolph now stepped in front and quickly touched some part of the panel, and at once without any noise the centre disappeared, leaving a vacant space framed in the *basso-relievo* wood-work. A rush of cool air nearly extinguished the lamp in Mr. Hastings' hand, and both father and daughter looked with startled gaze into what appeared a yawning gulf in place of the beautiful panel which through so long years had daily met their gaze.

"Well, you are indeed a magician, Mr. Kuprianoff," said the host, after a moment's natural pause; "what wonder will you spring upon us next?"

The aged man laughed softly, saying: "No, not a necromancer by any means, Mr. Hastings, but one who believes in bending nature to man's uses within the bounds of natural law. But look, now your eyes are becoming used somewhat to the gloom, and see the rails and the little car upon them, on which Adolph has brought me so easily and safely." Yes, there was a ladder leading below, and at a depth of perhaps fifteen feet they could just distinguish, by the fugitive rays cast into the dark abyss by Adolph's lantern, a small car with a comfortable seat resting upon what looked like the rails spoken of by the old man. "We shall go home in half an hour easily, as it is slightly down grade all the way to the cave. So good-by, dear friends, and pardon us for such uncanny midnight visitation. After

we pass through the centre of the panel it will slide back to its former position, and no ordinary force short of absolute destruction can open it from your side ; but I will explain the mechanism on my next visit. May Heaven bless you both. You are worthy to be the possessors of my old home."

"Amen," fervently repeated the son ; and so these two passed through the panel, the elder descending the steps with marvellous agility considering his phenomenal burden of years, and then the host and his daughter found themselves gazing at the magic panel, which had been restored to its usual place with the same ease and rapidity with which it had left it.

"Oh, father, and to think we knew nothing about this through all these years."

"Something to dream over, my dear. We have, indeed, had some strange experiences and revelations within a short time. Who will say that fact is not as strange as fiction ? But good-night ; it is almost two o'clock, and we both need rest."

"I know, father, but I feel nervous about them travelling through the earth in this curious way at this time of night."

"Why, Elsie, they are safer there than on the common road, and night and day are the same in all subterranean regions."

"Of course. I never thought of that. Good-night, papa."

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### UNMASKING.

"ELSIE, sweet coz, when are you going to fulfil your promise, and take me to see this very ancient witness of yours?" inquired Seaman. "I'm just dying to see and talk with such a prehistoric specimen of the race."

"Prehistoric specimen, indeed!" exclaimed Elsie. "Pray, do you only date history back a hundred years?"

"Yes, our history as a separate and independent people does not yet date back a hundred years, and your animated fossiliferous find dates back, I believe, one hundred and twenty. Whew! wouldn't I like to dissect him."

"Hush, you horrid creature. Ellen, does he often talk in that blood-curdling way in your presence?"

Seaman glanced at his fair young wife comically and anticipated her reply with, "Of course I do, and only she persuaded me to come over here this afternoon, I should now possibly be explaining to her the special features in a beautiful case of hydrocephalus which I have at present on hand."

"I don't believe a word of it. He doesn't talk to you about such things, does he, Ellen?"

Ellen laughed merrily as she answered: "Well, Warren does talk about his cases to me sometimes, and tells me, I suspect, some, as you term them, blood-curdling things, but not understanding medical language very well as yet, I don't suffer very much. He dresses his ghosts pretty well before he introduces them at home."

"But you soon will understand medical terms, my love, and then, hurrah for the ghosts!"

"Oh, yes, and by that time I shall be used to them. Would you believe it, Elsie, I took a skull in my own hands this morning without shuddering, and I know the meaning of cerebritis, and aphasia, and some other big words."

"And, pray, what may cerebritis mean, my learned cousin?" asked Elsie, with mock deference, "or shall I say Dr. Ellen?"

"No, no, I haven't graduated her yet; she is only a freshman in the Seaman Medical College. But tell Elsie what is the meaning of cerebritis, Ellen."

"Cerebritis is," began the young wife with great deliberation, "the loss of the memory—of inflammation of that part of the brain by which we remember words;" adding naively, "I didn't think I could have remembered such a long thing so well."

Elsie looked duly impressed with the explanation of the curious term, but Warren, after a vain effort at self-control, finally went off into a paroxysm of hilarious laughter, to Elsie's mock indignation and his wife's open-eyed amazement.

"Thus endeth the first lesson," he blurted out on recovering his voice, and then again gave way to his risible propensities.

"Upon my word, sir, you are a dignified tutor, certainly, to indulge in such unseemly merriment because your pupil made some slight error in defining a barbarous medical term. Never mind, Ellen, I think more of you because you did not have it quite right. I should have gravely doubted your sanity if you had made no mistake in such a thing. It means something horrible, I know, or he would not have tried to teach it to you."

"I am sure I thought I knew it perfectly," returned Ellen. "Cerebritis—loss of the words which express the inflammation of the brain," she repeated, as if to herself.

"That is just it, my dear—loss of the words, or rather of the ideas which those words represent. You evidently are suffering with cerebritis," laughed her husband.

"Well, I'm going to prescribe for her if she is, and so you will lose one patient, Mr. Medicine. Come, Ellen, I've something I want to show you, and so we will leave this learned gentleman to his own devices for a brief period. Perhaps, Warren, you can study out some more peculiarities in cerebritis while we are absent. By-by."

But Dr. Seaman did not find much opportunity to add anything to his knowledge of the disease his cousin referred to, for in a few moments after the girls disappeared his uncle entered the room in some excitement, inquiring for his daughter.

"Startling news, Warren," said he, with a flush on his cheek his nephew had not seen there for many a day. "That old rascal Liscomb escaped from the prison, with the assistance of a confederate, last night, or rather yesterday afternoon, but they have been recaptured, caught before they could secrete or disguise themselves, and they are to have a preliminary hearing this afternoon at three o'clock before Justice Gorman, and I am asked to be present. I want Elsie to go too, and you and your wife had better come also. What do you say?"

"Just the thing, if Ellen is willing. They left the room just before you entered. I am very glad that fellow didn't escape, and the attempt is a tacit confession of conspiracy; but, Uncle Hastings, I have felt all along that this old man is only a tool in the hands of some keener rascal. Pity we couldn't nab the principal."

"Perhaps you are correct in your surmise, Warren, and if so, there is a chance that Liscomb, to save himself, may be induced to confess, but the examination of the confederate may throw some light on the matter."

Just at this moment the ladies entered and on being in-

formed of the subject on hand both expressed the liveliest interest in the proposed arrangement, and promised to be ready at the appointed hour.

Justice Gorman was a gentleman of wealth, living a couple of miles from the Hermitage. He was a retired lawyer, and had proved a very brave and efficient justice of the peace since his appointment, some ten years before. His large office was well filled when Mr. Hastings and his party arrived, for the news of the capture had been pretty fully circulated in the neighborhood. The justice invited Mr. Hastings to take a seat beside him, but he declined, for some reasons of his own, and seated himself beside his daughter.

The magistrate opened his little court promptly at the time appointed, and ordered the new prisoner to be brought in. He was at once led in front of the desk by the local constable, and the professional-looking person who had figured in the former trial followed close behind, watching the prisoner like a hawk.

"That is a singular-looking man, that detective; he seems to be shadowing this Liscomb and his friends," remarked Mr. Hastings to his nephew.

"He does look like a very Nemesis in male attire. Elsie was just telling me the part he played in arresting the elder criminal before," replied Seaman.

The prisoner was a heavily bearded man, in middle life, with a florid complexion and red, bushy hair. He looked somewhat like a farmer who had been on a spree and was half-ashamed of himself. When called on to plead, he responded in a deep, gruff voice:

"Not guilty, yer honor."

The constable here made his statement as to how he came to arrest the fugitives, but frankly disclaimed any special merit in the affair, giving all the credit to the detective before alluded to. "This gentleman came to me day before yesterday, and says he, 'Mr. Blank, I want yer to be

on hand to-morrow, as there'll probably be something to do ; likely a prisoner or a couple of them to arrest,' says he. But he gave no manner of details, but told me where to be about sunset, and he'd tell me further. Sure 'nuff, I was in the place he said at the time, and in about an hour I got a message from him, and went and found him with two saddle horses, and rode off about ten miles, and arrested these two fellers sleeping in a barn. That's all I know about it."

At the request of the justice the detective here stepped forward, and made his statement. His voice was scarcely audible, except to those close by. Elsie could only catch a phrase here and there, but the tone sounded strangely familiar, and she began wondering where she had heard it before. The speaker seemed to be speaking under suppressed excitement, quite in contrast with the stolid demeanor and unruffled passivity of his class. He briefly and rapidly stated that having reason to suspect that the prisoner Liscomb contemplated escaping from prison by the connivance of a friend outside, he had taken precautionary measures so as to insure the capture of the pair before they had proceeded too far.

"But why, if you knew of the intended attempt at escape, did you not inform the prison authorities and so frustrate it?" asked the justice.

"Because," answered the detective in a voice harsh and metallic with concentrated passion, "because I wished to be instrumental in detecting and bringing to justice one of the greatest scoundrels on this side of hell. He has given you a wrong name. See for yourself!" and turning, with the quickness of thought, to the prisoner who stood on his left side, the speaker suddenly grasped the reddish-brown beard with his right and the bushy hair with his left hand and jerking them violently apart held up before the astonished spectators, including the prisoner himself, a false

beard and wig of ample proportions. So quick had been the officer's action that the culprit, whose arms had been folded carelessly on his breast, had not time to make resistance until the despoilment was accomplished, but now, with a horrible imprecation, he suddenly sprang at his despoiler and with a crushing blow laid him at his feet, and then hurling himself upon the prostrate man began to beat him with remorseless fury. Immediately the constable and another man near sprang to the rescue of the hapless detective, and dragged the vindictive villain from his victim, and in doing so showed to the horrified and astounded gaze of the party from the Hermitage the passion-distorted features of Harry Esmond. Yes, there was no doubt of it, although his face was rouged and a false mustache still held its place, and then the voice set all doubts at rest, as he uttered, in a tone of savage malignity:

"God damn her; I'd like to have killed her!" at the same time casting a glance of intense hatred at the detective, who was being borne senseless from the room.

Elsie sat pale and trembling, too sick and faint to move. Then, with a great effort, she turned to her father: "Father, do go and see if that poor fellow is badly hurt. And what did he mean by those dreadful words. Is there some other mystery here?" This was said in spasmodic utterances and as if each word was being wrenched violently from her, by mere force of will.

"My dear child, this is a dreadful shock for you, but it is the natural outcome of his bad life. Warren is with the injured officer and will report to us in a moment."

The room had been in wild commotion during the scene narrated, but order was soon restored, and the young desperado was now manacled, and stood bereft of his borrowed plumage, wearing only his own black curly locks and smooth face, with the exception of the ferocious mustache before mentioned, sullenly defiant.

Presently Warren returned, and taking Elsie by the hand said, gravely: "My dear cousin, prepare for another startling disclosure. This detective is a woman, so there has been masquerading all round. God knows what her motive is, but she has been the avenging Nemesis to track this criminal to his fate. She is recovering from the savage blows dealt her by that coward, who evidently recognized her, and naturally she wishes to see one of her own sex. She asked if you were not in the court room, and requested to see you alone. Will you go in, or don't you feel well enough?"

"Of course I will go. You don't object, father, do you?" said the young lady rising, her color coming back as she thought of what this poor woman must have suffered before assuming this strange attire and vocation.

"Go, my child, if you wish, but try and recover your natural self-control before going in."

She felt that sense of weariness and keen heart sickness which comes to every true nature on having hopes dashed to the ground, and finding someone for whom we have toiled and suffered and prayed prove utterly worthless and base. Perhaps there is no heart-sinking like this. She opened the door quietly and entered, and there, lying on the sofa, still wearing the detective's dress, but with the head and neck disguise all thrown aside, her startled gaze was met by the familiar face of the French housekeeper, Mrs. Wagram. Her hair was dishevelled, and forehead and face discolored by the cruel blows of the infuriated Esmond; but in spite of her generally damaged condition there was no mistaking the look of triumph upon the Frenchwoman's countenance.

"Oh, misericorde, Miss Elsie, I am dying, I am dead. That bête noir. But I fixed him. I have been after him all this long time, and he didn't know it. He deceived me once and made a tool of me to rob the house, and I

swore then, yes, Miss Elsie, I swore a French oath, that I would hunt him down, if it cost me my life. And it has cost me my life. Oh, the brute, oh, those cruel blows. I am a dead woman, but I am glad I have got him now."

Elsie waited until the stream of excited utterance partly exhausted itself, and then said, soothingly: "The doctor says you will recover from this, only you must not become excited, or you may have a dangerous fever. We will have you moved to the house, and when you are calmer you shall tell me all about it, and how you came to do such a strange thing."

"Does the doctor say I shall recover? Oh, bon Dieu, then I can finish my work and rid you of that snake in the grass. Yes, I will be quiet;" and here she lay back wearily and closed her eyes. The Frenchwoman could, when she pleased, speak as good English as anyone, but sometimes out of mere whim or caprice would interlard her conversation with her native vernacular, and now and then, as fancy dictated, fall into a sort of broken half French, half English compromise language.

Meanwhile order had been restored in the outer room, and Esmond duly committed on the double charge of aiding and abetting the escape of a prisoner, and also for an aggravated assault on the detective. The culprit had assumed his usual jaunty free-and-easy bearing, looking the magistrate in the face with brazen effrontery as the commitment was read to him. He asked in a mocking voice what bail would be required.

"Five thousand dollars," replied the justice, after a moment's pause.

"Very moderate, I'm sure. Well, uncle," turning an insolent, half-sneering glance toward Mr. Hastings. "You see the fix I'm in. Surely you won't let your own nevvy go to limbo for a paltry five thousand dollars?"

All felt that this was mere bravado, and that the humili-

ation of having such a relative, must be a severe trial to the gentleman addressed, yet some curiosity was excited to see what course the proprietor of the Hermitage would adopt. Nor had they to wait long, for the uncle rose, and stepping forward so as to nearly face the reckless scamp, said, in tones in which indignation and sorrow seemed to be struggling for mastery: "You shameless scoundrel, the knowledge that you hold a blood relationship to me is, indeed, a bitter ingredient in my cup of life. From your youth you have manifested a moral depravity, which kindness, good counsel, example, and all the benign influences by which I surrounded you, failed to antidote. I know you to have been a liar and a thief, but what other crimes you have been guilty of during your absence from this community, God only knows. I have been a father to you, and you have repaid me by the blackest ingratitude and crime. You have escaped the consequences of your evil doing, so far as I know, up to this time, but now you are caught in your own toils, in the net which you have been spreading for others. The law shall take its course, and your complicity with this infamous conspiracy to rob me, your life-long benefactor, shall be thoroughly investigated; and if your liberty for the rest of your natural life is legally forfeited, as I hope it will be—for serpents like you should never be free to sting and injure their fellow-men—I will not raise a finger to prevent or lessen your punishment. I now regard you as a dangerous foe to society, and shall aid all I can in depriving you of your power for wrong-doing. The law shall take its course." So saying, the gentleman resumed his seat amid the solemn hush which had fallen on all while he was speaking.

From the cool contemptuous look on the countenance of the young man during the denunciation of his relative, it was expected that a bitter retort would be the result, and no doubt Esmond would have delighted in adding venom

to the sting he had already inflicted, but just as Mr. Hastings concluded Elsie re-entered the room, and the prisoner, catching her sorrowful sympathetic glance, dropped his head on his bosom, and the intended reply died on his lips.

"If Elsie hadn't entered just then" he said subsequently to an acquaintance, "I'd have scathed the old man so's he wouldn't have known where he was standing."

The culprit really loved his cousin in about the same degree that he despised and detested her father.

"Now, Elsie, my dear, remember we have done forever with that young man. He is thoroughly bad, and the best, and indeed, only safe thing for us all, is to have him immured for life, where he will be compelled to do what he always objected to—work."

"Uncle, I have met that precious relative of ours somewhere, I am confident, but where I cannot recollect; and I know he remembers me, too," remarked Warren.

Elsie said but little on the way home, for she felt as if her heart was bruised and sore. Pity, sympathy, regret, and indignation by turns took possession of her, and she indeed felt that the crisis in Esmond's career had come at last. But another uneasy thought would intrude itself too, the relation which Esmond had held toward Roland. She shuddered to think of where that weak young man might have possibly been led by his unscrupulous companion. This worried her so that she was half sick on reaching the house, and, excusing herself, retired to her own room for an hour, so that she could by solitude and thought calm the perturbation of her mind. A carriage had been procured and Mrs. Wagram brought to the Hermitage, where, safe in her own bed, with Dr. Seaman in charge of the case regarding her, the young mistress' mind was easy. But some step must be taken, she felt, with regard to young St. Johns. He must at any cost have his eyes opened to the

true character of Esmond. Yet she shrunk from taking any step which would more widely publish to the world the family disgrace. At last Elsie decided that she would at once write to Mr. St. Johns and tell him the facts, and hint that Roland's intimacy with Esmond might be perilous, and urge that it be broken off promptly, by parental authority if necessary. For she was well aware that her astute cousin could easily, to a young man of Roland's mental bias and development, make his present imprisonment appear in the light of a farce, and himself a sort of hero of romance, thwarted by an unkind fate in seeking to aid the unfortunate. To decide was to act, with Elsie, and the letter was soon written and on its way. Then she felt calmer and rejoined her friends.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### "WOES CLUSTER; RARE ARE SOLITARY WOES."

A WEEK later, and about ten o'clock in the morning, Elsie was on her way to visit a sick neighbor, carrying a small basket of dainty food for the invalid. The rude shock of her cousin's disgrace had been partially softened by time, and as suspicion only linked him with Liscomb as a possible co-conspirator, nothing farther having resulted from the investigation pursued so far, she felt inclined to take a more hopeful view of the situation. "He certainly told me that Liscomb owed him a large sum of money, and it may be that he was urged on to this desperate step by the hope that the prisoner if free, might be able in some way to repay him."

This view of the case seemed at least plausible, and it made her feel happier. To think of one who had been through childhood's years and early womanhood as a brother, the sharer in all her trials and triumphs—as lost to all hope—was unbearable to one of her affectionate nature. "Once a friend, always a friend" with Elsie Hastings, and disloyalty even in thought to anyone she had once known and trusted was impossible, even though every appearance seemed against him. She took a short cut leading through a piece of woods. It was a maple grove, and the trees were mostly very fine ones. Hundreds of barrels of sap had she seen gathered from these saccharine giants of the forest, and in the happy springs past by she had helped at many a "sugaring off." And the culprit cousin now behind the

prison bars had been her constant companion during these frolics. "Ah, well," she sighed, "what time does bring us to be sure." Just then she thought she heard her name mentioned. Yes, as she stayed her steps an instant, the word "Elsie" was unmistakably brought to her ear in a very low tone.

"Elsie, may I speak with you," came after an almost imperceptible pause. She trembled violently, for she thought she recognized her cousin's voice, and it boded no good she felt.

"Is it you, Harry?" at length she faltered.

"Yes," said the voice, a little impatiently, "I am here by the Elfin stump. Come over here, it will be quieter and out of observation."

The Elfin stump had been so christened by her long years before. It had been a large tree, some four feet in diameter, struck by the lightning which had almost riven it asunder, while subsequent storms had carried away the upper two-thirds. It had a blackened, weird aspect, and was an object of superstitious dread to many of the more ignorant people round. For an instant a half-defined dread, a natural womanly shrinking from the painful and harrowing, took strong hold of Elsie, and she felt like fleeing incontinently from the spot. Her father's last words, when speaking on the subject, "Remember, Elsie, we have done forever with that young man. He is thoroughly bad," rang in her ears, and urged her onward steps.

Again came that voice which could be soft and tender or harsh and brutal, according to the mood of the owner, and now the single word "Elsie" was pleading and plaintive as it came to the perplexed hearer.

Somebody says the soul lies in the voice. We cannot see the soul of our friend, but we can hear it.

"Harry, I cannot stay. I had better not."

But those pitiful beseeching tones, "Just for a mo-

ment, Elsie—you will not refuse me this once?" again arrested her steps.

"She who hesitates," says the old proverb, and so it proved in this case. In a moment more the young lady was beside her cousin, who wrung her hand passionately as he exclaimed:

"I knew you would not go back on a fellow, Elsie, but give him a chance to say a word for himself."

"Harry," she replied, when she could sufficiently command her voice, for she felt nervous and anxious, hardly knowing why, "the occurrences of the past few days have been so painful that it would have been better if we had never met again. You have mortally offended father, and he would not like my being with you now."

He interrupted her with something of his old bravado: "Well, didn't the old gent just go for me! why, the old duffer pitched into me when I first came back, though he hadn't seen me for nearly ten years. I don't like him for one cent, if he is my uncle."

She listened with amazement to this tirade, and her cheek rapidly changed from pale to burning red.

"For shame to speak of your best friend so. If you have no common gratitude toward your uncle, you might at least exhibit some respect for a father in the presence of his daughter. I shall leave you at once if you utter another word against a man who is as noble, true, and just as you are shiftless and ungrateful."

"Shiftless and ungrateful! This from you, Elsie, the only woman I respect and love? But I will not say anything more against the—I mean my respected uncle."

"Please explain what you want with me, for I must not delay," she said, impatiently, for she experienced an uneasiness she could not define. Something in her companion's manner alarmed her; his cheeks were flushed, and he acted somewhat as if he had been drinking; yet he

was not by any means intoxicated. But his eyes had a brilliancy, and his manner an appearance of half-suppressed excitement, which made her regret having joined him.

"Let us talk as we go on. You recollect this path well: it is parallel with the highway, and will not be much out of your way."

He then went on to tell her, in rather a rambling way, that he had succeeded in obtaining bail, and was a free man again; that his helping Liscomb to escape was to enable him to procure some funds with which to pay a part of his debt to the speaker. "I know it was foolish, but I was always fond of excitement, and never counted risks, and somehow generally come out on top," he said, somewhat boastfully.

His account of matters, or explanation, as he called it, and proposals for the future, were, she could not help thinking, although her own mind was in too excited a state to be quite judicial, singularly rambling and discursive. They had arrived at the end of the copse, and were about to emerge into the clearing beyond, when Esmond stopped suddenly and faced her.

"Elsie, you must be my wife. I cannot live without you. Come and be my guardian angel, and I will reform and be what you will."

He stood before her right in the path, so that to advance was impossible. A fierce glitter shone in his eyes, and a half-threatening lower of the brow showed her that the worst and most reckless motives were in the ascendant now. At first she had flushed indignantly when he so addressed her, but now her wish was to avoid him and escape from his power.

"Harry," she answered, quietly, but with visible effort, "you have no right to address me so. What you speak of you know can never be. That was settled before, and I spoke plainly then. I would do any reasonable thing to

help you to a better life, but this is only a wild dream. Let me pass, please."

He listened impatiently, the frown deepening on his brows, and as she concluded he bent toward her, and hissed rather than spoke, his whole bearing indicating the deep passion which possessed him.

"That is your answer, is it?—now hear mine," and instantly a handkerchief was thrown over her face, a hand pressed firmly upon her lips, and she felt herself borne rapidly down the slope leading from the woods.

At first the movement was so sudden that she made no attempt at resistance; but this passive condition was only momentary, and then she made vigorous efforts to free herself, but soon found she was but a child in the hands of Esmond. Suddenly he stopped, and she heard whispered words and the door of a carriage opened. Her captor, who was, she judged by his deep breathing, rather exhausted from his effort, then attempted to thrust her into the vehicle. She resisted with all her might, and she was more than ordinarily vigorous, and in the scuffle, in which she had to oppose the united strength of two men, the large silk handkerchief became displaced, and she cried loudly for help.

The covering was immediately reapplied with a muttered imprecation on the part of the stranger, for it was not Esmond's voice, she was satisfied.

Immediately the quick tramp of a horse was borne to her ears. Her captors heard it too, and redoubled their exertions; but the sound had given her new strength, and their efforts proved futile.

"Hold on, there—what are you doing with that lady?" rang out in trumpet tones. Her heart gave a great throb of exultation, her grasp on the panels of the carriage relaxed, and she knew no more. The horseman who had arrived so opportunely reined up his horse just as the now

flaccid, unresisting form of Elsie was thrust into the vehicle and the door slammed to.

"Drive for your life!" shouted Esmond, as he sprung on the box, while his assistant stood on the steps, with one hand on the door-knob and the other grasping the edge of the roof.

The driver lashed his horses, and away whirled the carriage before Adolph—for it was he—was able to intercept them. Rapidly wheeling his steed, the Russian was after them at full gallop.

In a few moments he was up with them, and called loudly on them to stop.

"Damn you," shouted Esmond from the box, "what business is it of yours? We're taking this woman to a lunatic asylum. You go back in a hurry and leave us alone, or it'll be worse for you."

"I don't believe you, and unless you stop I'll shoot your horses," returned the horseman, whose blood was thoroughly aroused, drawing a revolver as he spoke.

"Two can play at that game," returned the other, who unperceived by Adolph held a pistol ready-cocked in his hand. A report followed, and the Russian felt a tingling sensation in his left shoulder.

It was down-grade, and the pace of the carriage horses was terrific under the ready lash of the driver, and taxed the riding horse to keep up.

As Esmond fired, the Russian, feeling he was wounded, fired quickly at the off-horse, which, springing up suddenly, dashed forward more rapidly for a few yards, and then dropped in the traces, the other tripping and falling over him, the carriage overturning with the sudden shock. Esmond and the man on the step leaped safely clear of the vehicle, but the driver, not so fortunate, was heavily thrown. A scream came from the carriage, and Esmond, with white face, sprung toward it and tore open the door, which was skyward, owing to the position of the vehicle.

"Good God! Elsie, are you hurt?" he gasped, with agony in every feature.

Adolph, who was carried on some yards by the impetus of his steed, now dashed back, checking the animal within a few feet of Esmond, the smoking revolver still grasped in his hand.

"Right that carriage and release that lady, or by Great Heaven I'll shoot you down like rabbits," he exclaimed, with a fierceness of mien which left no doubt in the minds of his hearers that he would fully carry out his threat.

Esmond, however, was too much concerned about the safety of his cousin to think of anything else, and he and his partner worked feverishly to right the vehicle, while, like the figure of Avenging Fate, with the deadly weapon in his hand pointing at them, stood the horseman, an equestrian statue of fierce determination.

By the exercise of all their strength the two succeeded at length in raising the carriage into its proper position, and as it righted, the occupant sprung quickly out of the open door, right in front of Adolph. Her head was bare, and her dress torn and disordered by the terrible experience she had passed through, but otherwise she appeared uninjured.

Astonishment, sympathy, and fiery indignation seemed to mingle in the Russian's countenance, and for a second deprived him both of speech and power of action. At length, with almost livid lips, he contrived to gasp the word "Elsie!" and then the red blood rushing tumultuously from the life-fountain suffused his face, as he stammered out, "I mean Miss Hastings," while a wild impulse of passionate desire for vengeance seemed to sweep over him, carrying everything before it.

"Those devils incarnate!" and raising his right hand, armed with the instrument of death, he swung his horse fiercely about to look for her abductors and inflict swift

vengeance upon them. But the others had disappeared, with the exception of the driver, who still lay senseless on the ground, his head having come violently in contact with a bowlder on the side of the road.

"They shall not escape," he exclaimed, fiercely, putting spurs to his horse. But as the animal plunged forward, the thought of Elsie, abandoned and neglected, here alone, came to him, and he checked his horse so suddenly as to nearly unseat himself. "Forgive me; I am savage and brutal, but the thought of this outrage almost maddens me."

He sprung from the saddle and hastened to her side. "Are you injured?" he asked, tenderly, taking her hand and looking into her face anxiously. "Fool that I am, of course you are hurt. How could you escape?—and I in my insane fury about to abandon you. Forgive me."

Elsie, who had remained standing as if rooted to the spot, just where she had landed on springing from the carriage, rigid as stone, with eyes wide open and directed to the front, her left hand pressed over her heart, and the right extended straight out—never answered a word or moved a muscle. Her hand lay cold and motionless in his grasp, and she looked, indeed, but for the rose-tint on her lips and cheeks, as if she were a marble statue.

"Oh, they have murdered you," he moaned, in anguish. "Speak to me, my darling, my life."

And throwing his left arm impulsively around the passive form, he showered warm kisses on her brow and lips, while hot tears fell upon the motionless face like rain. The strong man trembled in his deep agony, and all the power of his vigorous manhood seemed to wilt and wither in the fierce flames of those few moments of bitter suffering.

There are supreme moments in our lives, both of grief and joy, when the iron of events, heated to a sevenfold intensity in the fervid fire of some harrowing experience,

seems to burn characters into the yielding soul never to be obliterated while time endures. There they stand, graven deeply into the rock of our memory, as a milestone on the highway of being, a monumental pillar with the ineffaceable writing upon it, a new birthday tablet from whose dating we begin henceforth to live or die.

Adolph felt, in those few moments of transcendent suffering, if we do think at these times—and we do, though automatically, and as it were by an agency independent of our volition, and outside of ourselves—that he never could be the same man again. He was in this dark experience dying to his old self, and the death-film obscured his vision, so that no gleam of the new life into which he was being born as yet reached him. God help us all when we are called on to pass through the dark valley of despair!

Elsie, the morning star of his life, for such he had called her, and such, indeed, she had become to him, was dead, so he fully believed. She lay lifeless on his arm, and when he placed her tenderly on the ground and almost wildly chafed her hands and tried to induce breathing, and met no response to his frantic efforts, hope died within him. Still, he persisted in his labor. Fetching water from a little spring he knew of hard by, he sprinkled her face and hands, working in a very fever of effort.

So busily was he engaged in his task that he was deaf to the sound made by a rapidly approaching carriage, and was startled presently by some one touching him on the shoulder, saying, "Can I help you, sir? What is the trouble?"

He looked up in a dazed sort of way, not ceasing his efforts, however, and saw a gentlemanly-looking man, who was regarding him with compassionate eyes.

"Are you a physician?" he inquired, eagerly, with a beseeching look which the other never forgot.

"I have studied medicine, and walked the hospitals once. Let me examine your patient."

The Russian arose, trembling visibly as he did so. "I fear there is no hope. She is——" He stepped aside, looking the word which his tongue refused to utter, and motioned the other to take his place beside the prostrate body.

The stranger knelt down and placed his ear to the heart of the motionless form. After a minute of careful listening, which seemed an age to the friend standing by, he rose, saying quietly, " She is not dead; the heart has still an exact and rhythmic, although very deficient, action. The pulse is not perceptible, but there is circulation going on."

"Is that true? can she live?" exclaimed the anxious listener, clasping the other's hands, and looking as if he were himself deeper within the gray shadows of the tomb than the one lying so calm and still on the grass beside them.

" My poor friend, calm yourself. It is a case of what medical men call 'trance,' and she will most probably come out of it in a few hours. She must have experienced some dreadful shock, which has thrown her into an hysterical condition, and this is the culmination. God bless me! what is the matter?" for as he spoke a sudden pallor spread over the face of his listener, and the Russian fell prostrate on the sod.

" Only a fainting-fit," he said, after feeling his pulse, to his two companions, who had remained in the background standing by the carriage in which they had arrived. " There, that will do; lay him quite flat. Keep the head low—he will come to quickly. These strong, healthy natures soon recover. What a splendid specimen of physical humanity! Ought to be an Englishman—probably he is. Been some bad work here this morning. We must find out what has done this mischief. But, bless my soul! we mustn't leave the lady lying there. Bring the carriage cushions. Yes, that will do. She will do nicely there. Fine, handsome girl she is. Have seen her somewhere before. Good Heavens! this is Miss Hastings!"

Two persons started at these words. One was the fainting man, who opened his eyes widely and rose into a sitting position, and the other was the professional-looking person we have met before, who bounded forward in intense excitement. Yes, it was the masquerading detective, who had kept by the horses, holding them while the others had been attending to the ailing ones.

"Oh, mon Dieu! Miss Elsie," and rushing forward, the speaker flung himself down beside the senseless form.

"Oh, great God! is she dead?—oh, tell me she is not dead!" he implored, after feeling the still face and hands with frantic eagerness. "Mon Dieu! it will kill her father."

"No, she is not dead, nor dying, but in a trance from which she will probably recover after a while," replied the leader, eying the professional-looking person curiously, as if he already half suspected the truth.

Adolph here arose from the ground, looking weary, and worn, and confused, as if trying to collect his scattered thoughts. Suddenly his eyes rested on Elsie's prostrate form, and with a moan of anguish he sprung toward it.

"She must not lie here a moment longer. You say she may live—yes, she shall live," he said, almost fiercely. "The star of my life cannot thus set in darkness. If father were only here, he could cure her."

These words were spoken as if to himself, as if he were holding strong converse with his own soul. And while speaking he had been moving about with instinctive energy and adroitness, preparing the carriage for the unconscious one.

The horse which Adolph had shot was only stunned, the bullet having glanced on the skull, but with sufficient force to prostrate the animal senseless for some moments. Now, however, on being released from the encumbering harness, it managed to stagger to its feet, and the other being uninjured, and nothing else seriously damaged, except the front

part of the carriage, the important parts escaping, it was decided to utilize the vehicle in conveying Elsie home.

In a few words Adolph put the medical stranger in possession of the facts of the attempted abduction and the subsequent incidents, and was amazed to hear him exclaim as he finished the recital, "Wonderful! Why, bless my soul, my dear sir, those are the very fellows I am after. No doubt of it, your description is correct. They are a couple of sharpers who have escaped from our claws in England, and I have been tracing them up all over this wild country of yours for eight months."

Then, addressing the professional-looking person, "Mr. Harrington, you go home with Miss Hastings, and this gentleman—I've forgotten your name, sir; thank you—Mr. Adolph, will accompany you. Richard, you go with me; they can hardly escape us this time."

In a few moments everything was so arranged, and Elsie lying on the cushions in the carriage. As they were about parting Adolph turned to the stranger and with a lurid fire in his eye observed, "Could you not come with us? You are a doctor, and we need your services; and then I will join you in seeking those devils, and Heaven help them if I find them! Yes, I know every inch of the country, and can follow a trail like a sleuth-hound."

"A good thought; and you can render us invaluable help, but we dare not lose the time or these chaps will have made cover. On foot they can only have gone a short distance. No, I am not a physician, although I have had a surgeon's training in part and know as much as some of them, but the patient needs no attention immediately and may not for many hours. Take her home and keep her in a well-aired, well-lighted room, and send at once for your family doctor, keeping, of course, a faithful nurse with her. Then you can join us at the Dyke House, or wait there until you hear from me. Good-by," he said, wringing Adolph's

hand; "don't be too cast down. The young lady will probably come out all right."

So saying, the speaker and his companion drove rapidly away in one direction, while the other two with their sad burden turned their horses' heads toward the Hermitage, Mr. Harrington driving and Adolph in the carriage to watch over the unconscious Elsie. The saddle horse was hitched to the vehicle behind.

Once only did either of these two strangely-brought-together companions speak during the short trip; it was when Adolph asked, "Who is that gentleman who has just left us?" and the other answered, "An English detective."

Before departing the Englishman had bound the unconscious coachman hand and foot.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### NEMESIS.

"Doctor, can she recover? is there any hope?" and the father looked eagerly into the face of the old physician.

"Yes, she can, and probably will."

"And be as well as ever? Be frank with me; remember it is my only child, but yet I must know the truth," and the voice was firm, although so husky as to be hardly recognizable for that of the owner of the Hermitage.

"Now, my dear Mr. Hastings, you are asking too much. In these cases of catalepsy or hysterical trance-coma there are several contingencies which have to be guarded against, but judging from the healthy nature of your daughter, I think I am justified in giving the most favorable prognosis. I hope for her complete recovery."

Mr. Hastings wrung his hand silently, unable to trust his voice.

Dr. Rand had been the family physician, and had watched over Elsie from birth, and fortunately had been in the vicinity when the melancholy cortege bearing the poor senseless girl had reached the Hermitage, and was at once called in. He had formerly resided in Melville, but for the past few years had lived on a farm within an hour's ride of Mr. Hastings, gradually withdrawing from active practice, as he was now past seventy. Just as he was leaving the house, after giving full and minute directions as to Elsie's treatment, he was touched on the shoulder by Adolph.

"Doctor, before you go will you kindly examine my shoulder. I think I have a bullet there, and it is becoming quite painful."

"A bullet! a bullet! Is it possible, and you keeping so quiet about it all this time! Let me see it at once," leading the way to a small reception-room off the hall. "'Pon my word, young man, you have a great deal of endurance and courage. Why, that must have hurt you badly!" exclaimed the old physician as he gazed with critical eye at the swollen tissue. "Ploughed right through the fleshy part of the deltoid and just escaped the edge of the glenoid cavity. Lucky fellow! an eighth of an inch more and we should have had a fracture of the joint. Aha! here's the mischief-maker just under the skin on the posterior aspect. Can you bear a little cutting? Of course you can. Any man that can bear a wound like that for an hour without squealing can endure anything," and while he was speaking the old surgeon had cut deliberately down on the bullet and in a moment had it in the jaws of his pocket forceps. "Aha! pretty firmly imbedded. Don't move. Yes, here it is—a thirty-eight calibre, at the least," holding the lump of lead before his patient. "That fellow shot to kill. Do you know who he was?"

"The affair was so sudden, and the excitement while it lasted so intense, that really I didn't notice the fellows as closely as I ought to have done, but I shall meet them again, for I am off as soon as you have dressed my wound, to aid the detectives in hunting them."

"Nonsense; you mustn't think of such a thing, with that shoulder; you must keep quiet or you may have serious inflammation."

But remonstrances were vain, for in ten minutes the wounded man was on the road to the place of rendezvous.

On arriving at the Dyke House he found the two detectives awaiting him.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Adolph, again, and if you know the twists of this confounded country, I shall be only too glad to submit to your guidance," said the leader, grasping him warmly by the hand. "Fact is, the fellows know the region and have taken to hiding. Haven't been on any of the regular roads at all."

The Russian remained silent a moment, and then, as if having decided something in his mind, exclaimed vehemently, "I have it! They are in the gopher hole. You must take to saddle and I will guide you."

In a brief period the three horsemen were on the way to the "gopher hole," having, at Mr. Lippens' suggestion, for it was he, partaken hastily of some refreshment. Adolph demurred somewhat at the detention, so eager was he to be on the road, but yielded to the sententious remark of the other, that "No man can fight well on an empty stomach."

The gopher hole was a sort of cache or hollow in the rocky wall which formed one side of the bed of a mountain stream which rushed tumultuously through the winding course nature had riven for it by volcanic agency and the periodical attrition of mud, sand, pebbles, and bowlders which mingled in the flood of spring and early summer. During the rest of the year the stream bed was dry, and only then was the cache accessible. Its existence was known only to a few hunters and trappers, and it was difficult of access. Adolph and Hiram both knew it well, having frequently taken refuge there from sudden storms when out hunting.

"Take care! Stoop as you pass along here, for you can be seen from the gopher at this point," said the Russian, as suiting the action to the word, he crawled rather than walked along a ledge leading obliquely to the entrance of the hiding-place.

The others carefully followed his example, and soon the

three were in close proximity to the den. They had been obliged to leave the horses some distance away tied to convenient saplings. So carefully had they conducted their approach that no sound had apparently reached the outlaws, judging from the stillness which prevailed.

"I fear we have had our labor for nothing," whispered the Englishman.

The Russian answered by pointing to a slender jet of smoke which was curling up lazily from the mouth of the cache.

"Hist! Down on your faces!" and the warning came none too soon, for a bullet whistled in unpleasant proximity to the party as they crouched on the pathway.

"Now give them a volley right in the mouth of the den," said the detective, who here seemed to realize the situation, and at once took charge. Simultaneously three reports rang out, making echoes in every direction.

"There is no way of escape for you but by this path, as you well know," shouted the detective, having been so informed by Adolph. "If you wish to save your lives surrender at once."

A negative to this proposition was at once entered by a second shot from the gopher hole.

"Say," whispered the other detective, a remarkably silent man, who during the trip had only spoken when directly addressed; "I hev a s'picion as to who one of them fellers is. I've been 'quiring around an' find that the nevvy of the old man down the big house jest worships the ground thet young woman walks on—her thet's lying good as dead yonder. Yer see thet too, in his trying to tote her off in thet kerrige. Now, 'pears to me thet ef he knew she be pooty near done for, owing to him, he'd kinder wilt an' mebbe listen to reason."

Lippens listened patiently and brightened at once.

"There's something in you, Grubbs, after all." And in a

whisper to Adolph, "I brought him along because he's as strong as a horse and as brave as a lion, but didn't go much on his head."

They were crouching behind a projecting rock which sheltered them, and yet gave them control of the mouth of the outlaws' hiding-place. So the detective decided to try and parley once more, and leaning forward as far as he deemed prudent he called out in a clear voice, and as they were only some forty feet distant, he knew his words would be easily heard:

"It is no use fighting against fate. We are bound to take you, boys, if it requires a week, and I wouldn't care, only for that poor dying girl that we carried a couple of hours ago to the Hermitage. A nice sight for the poor father, seeing his daughter, that left the house healthy and strong, carried home as good as dead."

"It's a damned lie!" shouted a voice from the cache; "I saw her jump out of the carriage myself."

The agitation of the speaker was manifest in the trembling of the voice, and the detectives exchanged smiles with each other at the startling admission conveyed in the words.

"What you say is true," replied Lippens, "but I give you my solemn word, that she hasn't moved or spoken since. The shock paralyzed her, and if she is not already dead, her life hangs on a thread."

A deep, hollow groan came from the den, and presently a step was heard and a man staggered forth, holding one hand pressed to his forehead and the other extended beseechingly toward the besieging party. His face, Adolph could see, was drawn and white, and his eyes seemed to be protruding from their sockets.

"For God's sake, men, if you are human, is Elsie dead; can it be that I have killed her?" Here his pistol dropped from his nerveless grasp, for he had been holding it, muz-

zle down, as if unconscious that he held it at all, and at the same instant Lippens leaped forward and seized him.

"Tell me, tell me the truth about Elsie! I surrender; do with me as you please, but tell me truly, does she live?"

So piteously did the pale face plead that even the experienced detective was touched, while Adolph's desire for vengeance died away, and his own intense grief was softened as by sympathy in presence of so much abject misery.

"Miss Hastings is just alive, and that is all. She lies motionless as a piece of that rock yonder."

Could this nerveless, wilted, utterly feeble and woe-begone piece of humanity be the gay and scornful Harry Esmond, the man who believed in using his fellows as so many pawns to help him win his game and checkmate his opponents?

The truth was that, like Achilles of old, this singularly resolute and ruthless man had been struck by the arrow of fate in the only vulnerable point in his hardened nature —the love for his cousin; for difficult as it may seem to reconcile his conduct with such a sentiment, Harry Esmond loved Elsie with all the intensity of a strong, undisciplined nature. She had been his boyhood's admiration, his manhood's passion, and the determination to make her his wife never wavered, let such consummation be arrived at in what way it might. Her positive refusal to view him in the light of suitor did not turn him from his settled purpose. It galled and exasperated him, to be sure, but largely because he suspected her partiality to another, and that other he felt satisfied was the Russian, Adolph. But this discovery of an obstacle in his path was only the prelude to concerting measures for its removal.

His detection and subsequent incarceration for attempting to free Liscomb upset his plans for a time, and it was during his detention in prison that he conceived the project of abduction. Baffled in the attempt, there was

nothing for him but to hide until the storm blew over. Never supposing his cousin had been injured, his only thought had been how to escape arrest, when the appalling words of the detective reached him, and caused him at once to forget his personal safety in an overwhelming anxiety for the fate of her he had so fearfully wronged.

Sceptical and distrustful in a phenomenal degree as he was, yet there was something in the voice of the officer which came to him as truth, and at once remorse, despair, anguish seizing upon his soul as so many fiends, lifting him for the time out of himself, had scattered his ordinary selfishness, prudence, and sagacity to the winds. His mental agony was indeed harrowing to witness. He writhed as if in the grasp of some unseen demon, so that his captor with difficulty retained his hold on him; then, with a quick movement, twisting himself loose and stepping forward, picked up his fallen weapon, and before Lippens could prevent him, placed it at his temple and pulled the trigger. The charge exploded, but the bullet struck the rock above, scattering some fragments at their feet, and the next instant the pistol was wrenched from the would-be self-murderer, and he was securely handcuffed.

The assistant had stolen quietly forward, and unseen by Esmond was standing close by when the attempt at suicide was made; yet so sudden had been the movement that he had only time to strike down the raised elbow of the prisoner violently with his own pistol, and so diverted the direction of the death-messenger. A second later, and the young man would have paid the penalty of his crime, or crimes—prisoner, judge, and executioner—all in one.

"The game's up; come out!" shouted the detective in the direction of the cache.

"I s'pose I'll hev to, but if that blasted fool hadn't turned soft we'd a fixed yer. But three ag'in' one's not

fair play." So saying, the other culprit came grumblingly forward and gave up his weapon.

Adolph recognized him at once as the man who had stood on the step of the carriage after thrusting Elsie into it. He, too, was safely manacled, and the captors and captured left the scene of the arrest for the jail at Melville.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### OCCULT THERAPEUTICS.

Dr. Seaman arrived at the Hermitage a short time after the old physician left and at once proceeded to Elsie's room, where Mrs. Wagram was watching her with a mother's devotion. He started at first on recognizing her as his detective patient of the squire's office, and then frankly gave her his hand and inquired after Elsie's condition. She gave him as clear and succinct a statement as she knew, and then he examined the still unmoving form of his cousin.

"Undoubtedly a case of catalepsy induced by shock," he said to his uncle. "Nothing can be done but to watch her closely and keep the room well ventilated and at a temperature of about sixty. Plenty of fresh air is the all-important thing. I will try and meet Dr. Rand on his next visit."

"But, Warren, how long may this condition last? When shall we look for a change?" inquired the anxious parent.

"If it continues very long we shall then have to institute measures to restore her, but for the present I should not advise it. Now, uncle, you must not worry yourself; she will come to all right, I have little doubt, as she seems to have sustained no injury so far as I can tell at present. She has such a naturally strong, healthy constitution that I have every hope in the case."

"But she does not seem to breathe at all, and I cannot feel any pulse," urged his uncle, who seemed to have grown many years older within the past few hours.

"That is true, my dear sir, but yet respiration and cir-

culation are going on regularly, and quite sufficient to maintain life. She must be kept well covered so as to secure a uniform warmth. My advice is, not to interfere at present, but give nature a chance. However I will consult with Rand about it this afternoon."

When Dr. Rand arrived at the Hermitage he was accompanied by Dr. Seaman, and the two at once proceeded to the room of the young mistress of the establishment. After spending a few moments there they retired for consultation, and when their deliberations were over sent for Mr. Hastings and told him that they coincided in not taking any active measures until the following morning. They found Adolph awaiting them in the hall and eager to know the state of the patient. Mr. Hastings grasped his hand warmly, thanking him earnestly for what he had done for his child, although the full extent of the obligation he was not aware of, neither did he know that his own nephew was the cause of all his present woe. Seaman, on being introduced, was much impressed with the frank, manly bearing of the Russian, and asked to be permitted to examine his wounded shoulder. Mr. Hastings urged him to remain in the house for a day or two, that he might have proper surgical attention.

"I dare not accept your kindness, on account of my father. He is much distressed about this matter, and at his great age it would not take much to snap the feeble thread of his life."

"Surely," said Seaman, a sudden thought striking him—"surely you are not the son of that wonderful old man I have heard of who has lived upward of a century?"

"Yes," replied the other, his eyes kindling, "I have the honor to be his unworthy son. But, dear friends, I must not delay; yet, if Mr. Hastings will allow, I will come here morning and evening to have my arm looked after by these gentlemen."

This was gladly agreed to by all; but the old surgeon smiled to himself as he thought how little place the wound had in bringing the gentleman there twice a day, having borne the presence of a painful injury and an irritating lump of lead for several hours without a single complaint.

"He's a born soldier, that fellow. I like him immensely," he remarked to Dr. Seaman, in parting from him, after discussing the peculiarities of the Russian's wound.

Elsie's condition remained unchanged all night, and the physicians determined to make some attempt to arouse her. The elder one left the selection of agents or modes of operation entirely to his younger colleague, as being fresher from his studies and more conversant with new methods in surgery and therapeutics. So Seaman decided to try the effects of the cold douche on the head, hoping by the sudden impulse given to the nervous and arterial systems to "arouse the sensorium and awaken the cerebral mass and heart into action." At least that was the way he expressed it to his senior. But although this was faithfully tried as long as deemed safe or judicious, no result followed. Elsie was as lifeless, apparently, excepting the slight color in her cheeks, as the couch she lay on. Dr. Rand hinted at "firing," but Seaman shrunk from such seemingly harsh measures except as a last resort, on account of his uncle's sensibility. In the afternoon some other efforts were made to break the dread death-like stupor in which this hitherto vigorous young life was enchained; but all in vain—every effort proved futile.

Regularly, morning and evening, Adolph came to the Hermitage with eager, questioning face, bringing the choicest flowers and ferns and mosses that were to be had in garden or field at that late season, for the fall was well advanced and winter near. It was a question among the observers as to which of the two, the Russian or the

father, showed the wearing, depressing effects of this fearful ordeal most. Certainly, the mental strain was terrible in both cases.

On the fourth day the condition was, to all outward appearance, unchanged, except that a slight shrinking of the soft tissues, and a barely perceptible pinching of the features, might be observed, as if the exact balance between waste and repair were not maintained. The physicians refused to admit this, but the sharp eyes of love saw it, or felt it, and Mr. Hastings became correspondingly dejected. Everything known to medical science had been tried, even the "firing," although this was only known to those who conducted it. Skill seemed imbecile in the presence of this counterfeit death.

"Mr. Hastings," said Adolph, "father says, now that the doctors have failed, he would like to visit Miss Hastings. You know he was educated for a physician, and really he has remarkable skill in many ways. With your permission we will be here in this room at eight this evening, by a method you understand."

Mr. Hastings cordially agreed, and somehow for the rest of the day seemed more hopeful, although he could hardly say why. Oh, this hope deferred! How long the day seemed! How wearily dragged the hours until eight o'clock arrived! Mr. Hastings entered the library just as the French clock on the mantel was striking the hour, and found the expected guests awaiting him. Grasping the hand of the ancient Russian fervently, for a moment his emotion choked his utterance.

"My son," said the old man, laying his left hand soothingly on the shoulder of the stricken parent, "believe me, my heart is with you in this sad trial, and keeps pulse of hope or anxiety with yours. May I see the dear child?"

"Yes," responded the other, regaining his self-possession by an effort. "Your presence is indeed a comfort to me in

this the saddest hour of my life. She thought so highly of you. The doctors insist she is not dead; but what can I think when for four days my child has lain without the slightest movement or sign of life—no breath, no pulse? What more is death than that?" And here the heavily burdened heart could hold up no longer, but sinking into a chair, he covered his face with his hands and sobbed aloud.

The ancient man sat down beside him.

"My dear friend, the word of the physicians should be accepted by you. They could not deceive you in such a matter. The visit of the dark angel is sometimes strangely simulated, and the counterfeit resemblance casts a shadow on the heart, when the real is nowise nigh the dwelling. Death has many brothers with strong family likeness, but to none of them does he intrust his well-filled quiver. Surely, I believe it is only a peaceful, harmless likeness of the dread monarch, and not the king himself, who has kissed the dear child into such absolute quietude."

"Thank you," said the listening one, on whose bruised heart the words fell like balm, and rising, he passed his arm through that of the aged guest, and followed by Adolph, in obedience to a sign from Mr. Hastings, these three passed up-stairs, and into the presence of the unconscious maiden.

Mrs. Wagram was in attendance, and so was Ellen, who came up as soon as Seaman informed her of the condition of Elsie, and had remained since, giving the watchful care of a loving sister.

The father and Adolph halted a few feet from the bed, the latter covering his face, as if the first glance at that irresponsive face had overpowered him. But the Patriarch advanced calmly to the bedside, and gazed earnestly at the recumbent figure, without moving, for two or three moments. Then stooping, he put his face very close to hers, at the same time laying his hand on hers, passively lying across her bosom. In a brief time he raised himself,

and said quietly, as if speaking to himself: "'Tis the ether of life, not of death, that enshrouds her, and the 'aura' is a vital one." Then turning to the father and others in the room, he said, quietly, "Dear friends, will you retire just outside the room, so that the power of one individuality may be concentrated upon our beloved one here, who sleeps so sweetly," adding, as if in excuse for his request: "The presence of many anxious hearts dissipates and diffuses force, and so tends to prolong and deepen, rather than relieve, the lethargy. One voice only can reach the inner chamber of the enthralled spirit and tell the slumberer that fond hearts need her presence in the outer life."

So saying, he looked toward his son, holding out his hand. Adolph gave him at once a little case which he carried, and then retired, with the others, just outside the room, the two doors, leading the one into a dressing-room and the other into the hallway, remaining as they were, wide open.

Eagerly they watched this ancient sage as, taking from the case a small instrument somewhat resembling the violin, he laid it upon the table near the bed, and then turned toward the sleeper. The eyes had remained widely open since the moment of the attack, but to shield them from the light and possible harm, the physicians had ordered a piece of soft silk to be laid lightly over them. This the Patriarch now gently removed, and gazed directly for a full minute into the sightless orbs. Still fixing his gaze as before, he then placed his right hand on her forehead and his left over her heart. Thus he stood for at least five moments, as immovable as the patient. Suddenly he lifted his gaze from the quiet face in the direction of the watching friends, until it rested upon his son.

"Father wishes us to stand a little farther back—our influence is still felt," said Adolph, in a whisper, moving, as he spoke, back into the other room and half closing the

door, the others having moved with him, and the door leading into the passage was also half closed.

Almost at once rose a strain of delicious music which greeted the ears of the listeners like a benediction. It gave them a feeling of ineffable peace, and filled them with hope, they knew not why. A melody sweet and soothing seemed to fill the air, now full and rich and satisfying, and then light and delicate as the zephyrs of the pines in the early summer days. It rose and fell in mellow cadences, swelling in supernal harmony, and filling the soul with consolation and exceeding comfort, then soft and tender as the cooing of wild doves. Finally it came to the ear like a prayer—a very flood of beseeching rhythm and eloquent entreaty. The last strains seemed to sound the fitting amen, and then a deep silence fell on all. It was the hush of expectancy.

No one there could have interpreted the thought and put it into words; but one thought was there, and one only. Somehow, no one felt any shock of astonishment, but only that sense of deep peace and satisfaction which comes to us when faith is justified and trust is changed to sight, as the voice of the old man broke the silence, saying: "Do you know me, my daughter?"

A hardly perceptible pause to the painfully strained ears, and then—O Glory to God in the highest!—"Yes; but where am I?" reached them in response.

The voice was that which for four long days had been silent, and now every tone thrilled through the hearts of the listening ones as though 'twere the speech of one just from the invisible presence.

Again the old man's voice was heard in answer: "You are safe at home, my child, and now you must yield to me and sleep for a while," and here Ellen, who on hearing Elsie's voice had started involuntarily forward a half-step into the room, stopping abruptly as a warning glance of

the Patriarch met her, saw him make sundry passes over the face of the still recumbent maiden.

As he made the passes with the right hand, regarding her fixedly meanwhile, his other hand rested lightly on her pulse. Presently, looking toward Mrs. Seaman, he said, with a smiling face, in a low tone: "She sleeps—come and sit by her until she wakes."

Then the aged man moved slowly into the adjoining room, where his son and Mr. Hastings were.

"How is my child?" said the anxious parent, almost feverish with excitement.

"She lies in a natural slumber. The spell binding her vital forces is broken, and she will awake in health," returned the venerable Russian, in a voice which indicated great exhaustion.

"Father, you must lie down at once and be quiet. You are tired. May he rest on this lounge, Mr. Hastings?"

"Forgive my selfish thoughtlessness—certainly, lie here if you prefer it. You look tired. Mrs. Wagram, bring a pillow for this gentleman."

"Thanks, a thousand times; this is what I prefer, as I should like to be near the dear child when she awakes. Now leave me alone for an hour, and then I shall be myself again."

Pressing his hand gratefully, Mr. Hastings retired, leaving Adolph with his father.

Entering his daughter's room softly, he noiselessly passed to the bedside, and saw a decided change for the better. A feeling of unspeakable gratitude welled up in his soul as he saw her lying naturally on the right side, having a healthy flush on the cheek, and breathing perceptibly and regularly. How different from the rigid death-like inertia in which he had last beheld her, this calm, healthful repose!

"Thank God!" he whispered, pressing Ellen's hand, and then stole from the room.

He was joined in a few moments by Adolph.

"Your dear father has again given me my child, I think. How can I thank you both?" and tears of grateful emotion stood in the eyes of the proprietor of the mansion.

"Hush, my dear sir—Heaven gives and takes. We are only too glad to be its humble instruments. My father loves Miss Elsie as a daughter; but who knowing her loves her not?" returned the younger man, with heightened color.

Just then Dr. Seaman entered, saying, eagerly: "Any change?" and then, catching a glimpse of Mr. Hastings' hopeful face, exclaimed: "She is better, is she not?—she has come to?"

"Yes; she emerged from that awful state of rigidity and seeming death about ten minutes since," answered his uncle.

"Thank Heaven for that. But how is her mind—I mean her condition? Is she rational?"

"She is in a natural slumber, and the friend through whose agency this great relief has come requests that she shall not be disturbed until she spontaneously awakens." And the gentleman then narrated the event of the evening from the arrival of the Patriarch.

The nephew listened with much interest.

"These cases are beyond us, I frankly own, and it is always problematical as to the methods by which the sluggish sensorium can be roused into action. However, this is good news indeed. Where is Ellen?"

"Up-stairs with Elsie, watching until she awakes."

"How is your shoulder, Mr. Adolph?"

"Almost well; at least, I do not notice it," returned that gentleman, smiling. "We hunters don't think much of a scratch or so."

"You must be very vigorous to be able to consider that a scratch. But won't you introduce me to your father be-

fore I leave; I am very anxious to meet him, and he is of my profession, too."

Before Adolph could answer the aged Russian entered the room, and taking Mr. Hastings by the hand, said: "I have just come from the dear child and think it is better to let her rest until morning. So just let someone remain with her while she sleeps."

"Father, this is Miss Elsie's cousin, Dr. Seaman," said the younger Russian.

The sage clasped the extended hand.

"A noble profession yours, my son. May you worthily fulfil its duties."

Seaman regarded this man of one hundred and twenty years with the liveliest professional interest.

"You too, sir, are, I understand, a disciple of the healing art, and have succeeded up-stairs where we signally failed."

"Success and failure are only relative terms, my young friend; no true soul wholly fails, and none are successful single-handed. A long life has given me wide experience, and a careful study of the phenomena of life has taught me some of the secret laws by which nature controls and governs. In the case of the dear daughter up-stairs, I have merely followed in the line of nature's workings, and she has crowned my humble efforts with success. She demands a rigid obedience, but that yielded, her disciples may demand almost anything at her hands."

"Trust me, I do not ask through idle curiosity, but would you mind giving me some clew to the means you adopted in this case?" said the physician with a frank earnestness which seemed to please the ancient guest, who quietly answered:

"Every human being has some point of susceptibility in his or her nature which, under peculiar conditions that may render all else inert and passive, remains alert and active and liable to impression from external sources. For

convenience, let us term this the curve of sensibility, coming nearer the surface of the individuality, even as in the delicate integument covering the ends of the fingers or the lips some loops of exquisitely sensitive nerve-tissue are much nearer the surface than others, and so give earliest warning of what the parts may come in contact with. To treat successfully such a case as that of your cousin, it was necessary to know these curves of peculiar sensibility, and then seek appropriately to impress them. A violent shock experienced by her some months ago, and the phenomena attending her restoration, revealed to me such a point, and put me in possession of a key by which I hoped to unlock the mystery of her lethargic condition. The result, as you know, has fully justified my judgment. I hope to enjoy further conversation with you shortly, but I would suggest that you now visit the dear patient, and convince yourself of her safe condition, without awakening her." So saying, the old man cordially pressed the physician's hand, and he at once sought his cousin's chamber.

On returning, ten minutes later, he found his uncle alone, the two Russians having left the house. To his nephew's eager questioning Mr. Hastings returned such evasive replies that the other smiled, saying, "I understand—the old mystery of last spring. Well, he is a royal old gentleman, and no impertinent curiosity of mine shall annoy him."

"But, Warren, what do you think of Elsie now?" inquired the father, a little anxiously, for the tension of the last few days had been so great that he could hardly as yet relax his anxiety as to the ultimate result.

"Doing nicely, uncle. I do not think you need have any fear whatever. Her skin is cool and moist, and the breathing easy and natural. She will probably wake up in a few hours feeling weak and hungry, and then give her some bland, simple food."

"Cannot you remain with us to-night? It is now past

eleven o'clock, and your wife being here you have nothing to call you home, Warren, have you?"

"Impossible, my dear uncle. I must be in my office, for I have a case which may send for me at any moment, but I will be here in the morning bright and early. See that Ellen gets some sleep, will you, as she cannot safely sit up all night." So saying, the doctor with all the responsibility of an onerous and exacting profession upon him, left, and presently his cab wheels were heard grinding the gravel as he drove rapidly down the avenue.

The medical profession is indeed a slavish one, and the conscientious, general practitioner can rarely call an hour his own. His bills sometimes, to the unthinking, appear large, but in most cases they do not anything like represent the same return for labor and anxiety that law, commerce, and many other occupations receive. A conscientious medical man who has carefully prepared himself for his work, and then faithfully pursues it without fear or favor, has no superior among the world's workers, and deserves well of his race.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### THE AVENGER.

Elsie slept soundly until about four o'clock, and then awoke and asked for a drink. Acting according to directions, she was given a glass of milk, which she drank with apparent relish, and opened her eyes for a moment, but without speaking sank again into a quiet slumber. At six she again awakened, and after taking another cup of milk, expressed herself as feeling well and asked for her father. In a moment he was beside her.

"Oh, father," she said, fondly taking his hand and kissing it, "I seemed to have been ever so far away, and could not make you hear me. But the music came to me and brought me back. I have been in the cave, haven't I? But where is the Patriarch? Why, I saw him only a little while ago!"

"Yes, my dear, he was here only a short time since. How are you feeling? Do you suffer any pain?"

"No, not pain exactly, but I feel so stiff when I try to move. But where have I been? Oh, I remember, I was in the woods. But things seem confused after that," and here she looked so troubled that her father anxiously tried to change the current of her thoughts by asking if she did not wish some breakfast. She did not seem to understand him, but looked anxious about something, and suddenly drawing her father down, threw her arm round his neck, and whispered: "Is everybody safe—the Exile and—and Mr. Adolph?"

"Yes, my dear," responded her parent, not noticing her heightened color. "They have done so much for us, both of them. But you must rest quiet now and not talk any more until you have eaten something."

She relaxed her clasp and sank back on the pillow, closing her eyes languidly.

In a short time Mrs. Wagram brought in a light breakfast, which the patient ate with relish, and then wanted to rise, saying she felt as well as usual. She was finally persuaded to remain as she was until the doctor arrived.

Seaman soon appeared, and after a critical examination, declared himself delighted with her condition, and gave permission for her being dressed in a loose wrapper, and placed in an arm-chair by the window. He found that Elsie had a very confused and fragmentary memory of what had led to her illness, and had been most of the time unconscious, or at least only occasionally sensible of hearing voices afar off, which she only partially recognized.

"My recollection after the woods is not clear," she said, "but I think it will clear up after a while."

After breakfast Mrs. Wagram asked an interview with Mr. Hastings in the library, which he willingly granted, as there were many points in connection with past events which were very obscure to him, and which he was led to believe she could explain.

"You must have thought my conduct lately as being very strange indeed," she began, hesitatingly.

"Well," said the gentleman, gravely, "we have been so surrounded by mysteries recently that nothing seems to follow the usual channels. I shall be glad if you can throw any light on matters, Mrs. Wagram."

Her dark eyes flashed with suppressed excitement, and the color showed through the deep olive of her cheek, as she went on with nervous abruptness. "So long as Miss Elsie was in danger I thought it best to keep quiet, but now

it is right to speak. You remember that English detective who called here first some months ago?"

Mr. Hastings nodded assent, and a cloud darkened his brow at the recollection. His companion quickly noticed his expression.

"You doubted him, and connected him in your mind with the robbery?" she asked, and again he bowed his head assentingly. "You were wrong. That man was just what he claimed to be, and I have the proofs; but of that further on. You perhaps also recollect the second man who called, representing himself also as a detective, and the partner of the other? That was the bogus one, the real deceiver, and it was on the information obtained by him that morning that the robbery was committed."

"Is it possible that you know this, Mrs. Wagram—and you speak confidently? But proceed."

"How I know it will appear later on, but believe me, Mr. Hastings, it is a knowledge which has cost me much. However, when I found out that it was on the information skilfully drawn from me, and in consequence of my absenting myself, that the robbery was committed, I resolved, with all a woman's determination, to right the wrong, so far as in me lay, and if possible, bring the thief to justice. Your nephew Esmond arrived shortly afterward, and do not condemn me if I say I hated him from the moment I laid eyes on him. My instinct, if I may so term it, told me he was bad, and wild as it may sound to you, I suspected him of being in some way connected with the burglary. You look astonished, and no wonder, but I watched him as a cat would a mouse, and finally I found a thread, which, following, put me in possession of facts in the double life he was leading, inciting me to redoubled vigilance. I shadowed him, and so skilfully that he did not suspect me. How should he, indeed? It was not likely that he should suspect the plainly-dressed young man that so often came across his

path by accident, to be Mr. Hastings' housekeeper." Here the Frenchwoman laughed gleefully, as if she enjoyed the remembrance of her adventures. "Forgive me, Mr. Hastings, but the memory of how I checkmated that bad young man is very pleasant to me. But let me explain. My husband was a detective, and he trained me to help him, and many a time I have accompanied him, dressed in a suit of his clothes, on very dangerous expeditions. I was considered the best female detective in New York up to the time of my husband's death. When he was taken from me I gave up the work and accepted my present position with you. So you see it was very easy indeed for me to play the part I have done recently. But I must hasten with my story. When the attempt was made to swindle you out of your property I became aware of the conspiracy, and knew the guilty parties, but failing to obtain all the necessary links of evidence, could do nothing to hinder the trial; but when by the testimony of that old man you triumphed over your enemies, then I saw my opportunity. The old pretender personating Liscomb, I was satisfied was only a weak tool in the hands of a sharper knave, and I felt confident that eventually I could induce him to confess. His superior, suspecting something of the kind, made a desperate attempt to free him, and would have succeeded, but that I discovered the plot. I laid my plans so that I could arrest them both after leaving the prison. How I succeeded you know."

"Then you believe my nephew to have originated the plot to rob me of the Hermitage?" interrupted Mr. Hastings.

"Yes; and now all the proofs are in my hands. His accomplice has confessed, has turned states evidence, and swears that he was cajoled and bribed into the part he has taken. He held out stubbornly, but finally I found a means of overcoming his scruples, and Harry Esmond

stands as a convicted swindler and forger, as I know him to be a burglar."

The Frenchwoman spoke the latter sentences with a vindictiveness and ill-concealed triumph which fairly startled her hearer, who felt how different in resolution and aggressiveness was this woman, from the quiet, unassuming person she had always seemed in his household. He half shrank from one who could pursue a fellow-creature with such tireless energy for the sole purpose of vengeance. She seemed to divine something of his feeling, and smiled satirically as she remarked: "I am afraid you think me very cruel and unwomanly, and not fit, perhaps, to be any longer a member of your household. Be it so, I expected this. But much as I shall regret leaving you and Miss Elsie, yet I would pay the penalty ten-fold to be able to expose and punish the arch villain who made a weak tool of me, to further his bad purposes."

Many persons will forgive anything sooner than wounded self-esteem. Stab them there, and you arouse their worst passions and incur their deadly hatred. Mrs. Wagram was one of these, and she would have gone through flames to obtain satisfaction on an enemy who had so wounded her.

"There is much to excuse your bitter feeling toward that dissolute and criminal young man, but pray go on with this strange history. I fear I have not heard the worst," said Mr. Hastings, quietly.

She continued: "He secured your deed from Mr. Whitely and altered it to suit his purposes, as shown at the trial, and now sworn to by his dupe and tool, Liscomb. But he is a professional gambler as well, and I have good reason to believe has robbed, by his skill in this way, Mr. Roland St. Johns of large sums. You little suspected too, when that English detective called on you, that he was in pursuit of your own nephew for a forgery committed in London a year ago, but such was the case, and that is the

principal charge against him now, and will result probably in his extradition and a taste of English justice. One more point in the history of crime," and here for the first time since beginning her narrative Mrs. Wagram hesitated, and showed a disinclination to proceed.

"Why do you hesitate—let me know all?" said her hearer.

"Yes, it is right you should know all," she said, and resumed her former manner. "Well, then, when this young man found himself foiled and about to feel the fangs of the law he had so long outraged, he determined on a last supreme attempt to retrieve his position. He resolved to secure bail by one means or another, and once free, compel his cousin to marry him, even if he had to carry her off by force."

She paused, appalled by the look which had come into her companion's face.

"Go on," he said, hoarsely.

"Yes, he obtained bail, and then planned the abduction of your child. Again he was foiled. You know the rest."

The father covered his face with his hands for a moment, and then looking up with a countenance livid with conflicting emotions, said, in a choking voice, that sounded strange and unnatural to his hearer: "God may forgive him, but I never will."

Both were silent for a brief space, and naught could be heard but the ticking of the mantel clock, and the deep breathing of the Frenchwoman, who had spoken vehemently and was somewhat excited. Yes, a good deal excited, but outwardly comparatively calm. For this explanation was the culmination of long months of plotting and planning and scheming which had made her life a whirl and a distraction. Had it been an ordinary bit of detective work for wages, such as she had done again and again years ago, it would have been so different. But this was a personal mat-

ter, in which all her deeper feelings were enlisted, and which indeed in a sense would determine her future. Now that her confession was made, although the exciting sense of a complete triumph was hers, yet she felt sick and weary, and the natural physical and mental reaction from the severe strain to which she had been subjected, began to tell upon her. Mr. Hastings divined something of this, and rising, he took her hand, saying kindly : "This is neither the time, nor perhaps the place, to express the deep sense of obligation for what you have done for us. Believe me, I am not ungrateful, but you are not well, and must retire to your room and rest, or else after the terrible experience you have had, serious results to your health may follow."

She seemed much gratified at his words, and simply responding, in a feeble voice, "Thank you, I am not feeling very bright," she handed him a package of papers, and left the room.

The papers proved to be carefully kept notes of the successive steps she had taken while shadowing Esmond, and also the confession which Liscomb had made and which was duly signed by him.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR!

The Hermitage was once more at rest, and the inmates pursuing again the ordinary paths of life. Elsie had convalesced rapidly, and at the end of a week was seemingly as well as ever. Her memory seemed to be a blank from the moment of springing from the carriage, to the instant when her eyes rested on the Patriarch's face, as with seductive melody he had wooed her back to conscious life and all that that expressed to her affectionate heart. Twice had the aged man been to see her since, and altogether these ten days had passed very pleasantly in spite of the sad thoughts which would obtrude concerning her cousin. She felt that he was lost to them forever, and must pay the penalty his conduct had earned. And yet she had a tender regret for her childhood's companion, and even now would try and help him, had it been possible. Once during these ten days he had written to her, imploring a word of forgiveness, if she still lived—for he had been purposely kept in ignorance of her recovery—cursing his mad folly for what he had done, promising, if she only lived, and forgave him, to give the rest of his life in expiation of his crime against her.

"I love you, and you only in the world, Elsie, and would cheerfully sink the rest of the race to hell to save you," he wrote, in the bitterness of his self-accusations.

She handed the strange epistle to her father with some tears, and asked him to answer it, and, as a last favor to the unhappy culprit, tell him she was well again.

Mr. Hastings wrote a curt, sharp note, simply stating, that in spite of his infamous attempt, his child had come up from the borders of the grave, but should never see him more. "You are an outlaw, and must meet the fate of outlaws, now that justice has you safely in its clutches. I suppose I should express gratitude for the exception you make in favor of my daughter, when you speak of consigning all the rest of us to perdition, but I thank you not. Your crime toward her proves the utter baseness of your soul, and the hopelessness of reforming you. My only hope is that never again may you have the liberty to injure your fellows."

Mr. Hastings subsequently coincided with Mr. St. Johns and the local authorities, that as the charges against Esmond in England were sufficient, supported as they were by ample evidence, to insure him penal servitude for many years, it would be better to avoid publicity, considering his relation to the Hastings' family, and not to press the home prosecution.

"My advice would be," said the lawyer, "to allow his extradition, and hold the charges for conspiracy, abduction, etc., as a continual menace against him, in case he should ever attempt to return here."

So it was decided, and the prisoner so informed. The culprit manifested some relief at the announcement, not wholly unalloyed, however, as he intimated that he preferred American to English law, of which latter he seemed to entertain a wholesome dread. However, the information of his cousin's recovery seemed to give him such joy, that his naturally gay, careless manner, which had utterly deserted him during the suspense he had been in regarding her fate, returned, and such petty matters as trial, imprisonment, and criminal charges seemed to be entirely forgotten.

The one redeeming point in this singularly hardened

character seemed to be a devoted attachment to his cousin, strange and grossly selfish as had been his manifestation of it. Perhaps, after all, as one sings, "In the worst there's some spark of a nature divine." Harry Esmond dropped out of the life of the Hermitage family almost as suddenly as he had entered it a few months previously, but life to one member at least was a shade darker forever after, than it had been before. Why is it that so many fitted by nature to adorn and bless the world, selfishly choose to curse it, and leave the "trail of the serpent" wherever they go?

Arthur Liscomb, for there seemed no doubt but that the claimant to the Hermitage estate was really the son of the notary, when brought to trial, confessed that he had been the weak dupe of Esmond, who, meeting him in the mining regions of Australia, and ascertaining who he was, devised the plot to deprive Mr. Hastings of his property. The accomplished gamester, forger, and burglar, for he was either according to opportunity or inclination, soon initiated the weak and rather dissipated Liscomb—who had led a roving, dissolute sort of existence, and now in advanced life was ready for anything which promised money to satisfy his wants—into the crooked path of crime, until he had acquired a complete mastery over him. After maturing the details of the plot, which involved obtaining first sufficient funds to carry out the enterprise, and secondly, securing the deed to the estate, which he knew his uncle kept in a particular drawer at the Hermitage, Esmond set sail for America by way of England. In the latter country he expected to "write" himself into funds sufficient to replenish his almost exhausted exchequer. Having unbounded confidence in his own ability and adroitness, he entertained no doubt of being able to bring matters to such a pass, that his cousin would marry him to save the homestead to her father. It was apparently a rather wild dream, but his fertility of invention, and latent power of resources, had, he

argued to himself, never yet failed him, at least since his manhood. In London, by means of a skilfully forged letter and draft, he succeeded in victimizing a wholesale house, having large dealings with a Melbourne firm, to the amount of five hundred pounds. With this sum, supplemented by the winnings of a few games of poker, he was on his way to Liverpool en route for the United States, when accident placed him in the same compartment with Seaman, who became very unpleasantly impressed by his action and manner in a little incident which occurred on the trip. Esmond was thoroughly disguised, but the voice and eyes were indelibly fixed in the doctor's memory, hence the unpleasant scene of their meeting at the Hermitage.

"I was certain I had met him before, and under unpleasant circumstances. And to think we have the same blood in our veins. I feel like bleeding myself to syncope, if it would help matters. I hope you are not ashamed of your husband, darling?" Seaman said to his wife.

Her answer of course satisfied him on that ground, but it was some time before the physician could reconcile himself to the fact of the obnoxious relationship.

## CHAPTER XL.

### REVELATIONS.

My Dearest Elsie: How joyous I feel to hear that you are yourself again. I did not know of your terrible illness until yesterday. What an awful thing it was. But how did it happen? I have not yet heard. Isn't it dreadful about Mr. Esmond? Oh, I can hardly hold my pen when I think of how he has swindled poor Roland. Why, he trusted him like a brother. I am choked with indignation to think how he won large sums of money from him. Quite all his pocket money, I feel sure; Roland has hinted as much. Poor boy, he does feel so bad. But I will make it up to him when I sell my mining stock. I didn't tell you I bought a number of shares in a valuable mine in Australia, from which we expect great things. I made each of the girls buy some shares, and it has taken all we could scrape up in any way to pay the assessments. But Roland told me that his friend from whom or through whom he purchased our shares said that all mines cost at first, and then pay by handfuls. But I must find out more about the matter from Roland, and the name of the agent; I shall insist on knowing that at once. Perhaps you would like to buy a few shares; if so I think I might get some, though I understand there are none on the market now. Now, write to me, my dear, and tell me all about your shocking experience.

Yours, with a loving kiss,

Amelia St. Johns.

Elsie turned pale on reading this letter, and felt for a moment really sick at heart, as a suspicion would keep forcing itself upon her concerning this mining stock of which her correspondent spoke so hopefully.

"If Esmond should be the friend through whom Roland purchased it!" she said aloud; "and, oh! I fear he is. But

this matter must be investigated at once. I must write to Roland now and ask him to call, and I think he will not refuse me the truth."

But she was saved the trouble of writing, for a ring at the door told of a visitor which proved to be the gentleman in question.

"I took a run up to see poor Esmond," he said, "and could not resist coming to see you, especially since you have recovered from that serious illness, of which I did not hear until I saw Esmond."

Elsie saw by his manner and haggard appearance that his visit to the convict cousin had been far from satisfactory, but that as yet he did not suspect the gravity of her relative's misdeeds. She felt that she must take upon herself the unpleasant task of opening the eyes of this deluded young man, and also ascertain from him how far her cousin was implicated in the mining swindle, for swindle she felt confident it was. So adroitly had Esmond handled his dupe that even the fact of the former being in prison had not awakened the other to his real character. Roland had been told some specious story and seemingly believed it, or else shrank from knowing the real state of the case, Elsie could not determine which. She mentioned the letter received from his mother, and then asked him frankly if Esmond was not the agent from whom he had purchased the mining stock. He turned pale and red by turns, and stammered so in an attempted evasion, that she had no longer any doubt and insisted on knowing the circumstances.

"If you do not tell me, I shall write at once to your mother and tell her plainly what I am convinced is the truth, and then you must answer her. Which do you prefer?"

This had the desired effect, and he falteringly acknowledged that her suspicions were correct, but insisted strenuously that the stock was good, worth every dollar that

had been paid for it. What should she say, how undeceive this infatuated young man?

"You have been steadily deceived by my cousin from the beginning in everything else, and why should you suppose he has kept faith in this matter? I see I must be very candid with you, and must speak of matters which I would fain keep locked up in the silence of my own bitter memories of that unfortunate man. You thought him sincere when he encouraged you to propose marriage to me and press your suit after I told you such a thing was impossible." Her hearer regarded her with dilated pupils and seemed to tremble with a fear of what would come next. She went on, although her voice sounded strangely to his ears, and even his perturbed state did not prevent his seeing what an effort the statement cost her. "You little knew that he was urging his suit with me at that very time."

Roland started as if shot.

"It cannot be. The double-dyed villain!" he exclaimed, and then sinking on the sofa near him, cried like a child.

No need to say more. It was all clear as day now, and the reaction was terrible even to so weak a nature as his. He went to the other extreme, and, in his agony, remorse, and wild indignation told things that Elsie would fain have been spared the hearing of. He begged that she would make his peace with his mother or he could never face the home circle again. Indeed, he vowed he would shoot himself rather than see his parents again. Then his mood changed and a wild desire for vengeance took possession of him. As said before, he was no coward physically, and had he encountered Esmond in this state of mind, the Australian would have required all his prowess to have saved himself.

"Did he dare to propose marriage to you?" he demanded, wildly. "You are not trying me?" and he looked utterly miserable. No affectation, no lisping speech, no

foppery now. He seemed transformed by the varying passions of remorse, anger, and shame, which together raged within him and alternately gained the ascendency. But the pitiful position which his folly had placed him in regarding the mine swindle—for Elsie's words had swept away any doubts, if he really had entertained them, as to the nature of this transaction—dominated every other feeling, and covering his face with his hands, he groaned aloud: "How can I tell my mother, my poor mother, and she trusted me so! I am lost, lost, lost!"

Some natures as strong as the deeply affected spectator to his distress might have felt a certain measure of justifiable contempt for the weakness displayed by one who had hitherto borne himself in such a self-confident manner, but Elsie's strength of character was so blended with and toned by such full sympathy for suffering, no matter how deserved, that the idea of reproach, even indirectly, was quite foreign to her present condition of mind. She was well aware that the bitter agony of remorse, the keen sense of disgrace, the degrading position in which the reckless young man found himself, were all the natural outcome of wrong-doing, the just retribution following on the abandonment of the path of strict integrity. Crossing the room she took a seat beside the stricken man, and in a low tone said: "Roland, when one has done wrong, and injured others, regret and remorse are natural, but there is no reason to despair. Let us look the matter squarely in the face and see what is best to be done. I am too near your own age to be able to advise you, perhaps, but we women have instincts or intuitions in matters, which often serve us in place of larger experience. Let us talk the matter over frankly, and try and decide how you had best act under the circumstances."

Her words seemed to reassure him, and he looked up gratefully.

"What a fool, dolt, idiot I have been all along, to trust that scoundrel so implicitly," he said, in a choked voice. "But he led me along so cunningly, and made my affection for you the means of influencing me to follow his wishes. Oh! if I could only kill him, and then shoot myself!"

"Hush, Roland, that is not right; and the wrong is not all on one side, remember. No one can make us do wrong against our own volition."

"Elsie, don't misunderstand me. I don't excuse myself; I know I have been a weak fool, but he had seen more of the world, and was a great deal older in experience, and I was so blind and conceited as not to see it."

"Perhaps if this distress opens your eyes to your real defects of character it will not be too great a price to pay for such knowledge. But now let us speak of what is best to be done."

The Roland who left the Hermitage an hour later was a very different looking and feeling individual from him who had entered it. Then bright, cheerful, self-complacent, and somewhat disdainful in his bearing toward inferiors; now sad, downcast, and woe-begone, and so deferential to the servant that showed him out, that the girl hardly knew what to make of it, but with the perspicacity of her sex was not long in divining a cause.

"Poor young feller, I guess missus has given you the mitten this morning," she said to herself, for the attachment of young St. Johns to the heiress of the Hermitage was an "open secret" in the household.

It had been agreed between them that Elsie was to write to Mrs. St. Johns and explain, as gently as possible, the true value of the mining stock. It was indeed a task from which she shrank, but her sense of duty and right imperatively demanded the sacrifice of her own feelings in the matter, and she at once set to the task. As delicately and skilfully as possible she drew aside the veil that criminal

weakness and unscrupulousness, aided and furthered by an overwhelming desire for unreasonable gain on the part of the lady herself, had woven to conceal the hideous, naked facts. She began in direct response to Mrs. St. Johns' suggestion that she should purchase some shares, by saying that she could not help regarding such speculations as unwise in most instances, and apt to bring about in the mind of the speculators a condition akin to the gambling fever. Asking pardon for such frankness, she urged in extenuation the fact that in nine out of ten cases the facts went to show that these mining schemes were a swindle, and suggested the promoters of them had invariably one object —to fleece the shareholders. "I have heard father say that of the number that have in one way or another been obtruded on his notice only one was conducted with any degree of honesty, and in that one instance, although the stockholders at first made some money, the assessments for new and unnecessary machinery, and other expenditures, came in so fast that the smaller holders, the possessors of only a few shares, were unable or unwilling to stand the constant drain, and so were gradually 'frozen out,' that is, compelled to sell, and the schemers after, by this means, managing to get control of all the stock, then developed the mine, which proved to be really valuable, and so made a fortune."

Thus quoting her father, she gradually led up to the dreaded revelation, trying as she best could to soften what would necessarily be a severe blow. The loss of the money was only a trifle, she felt, compared to a mother losing confidence in a son that she fairly idolized, and in whose integrity and adroitness and business capacity she had unlimited confidence. On a woman of Mrs. St. Johns' passionate and unreasoning nature, Elsie knew the effect of exposing the deplorable weakness, duplicity, and cruel ingratitude of a loved and trusted son would be serious in-

deed. Weak people bear such shocks badly, having no latent strength, no genuine moral principle to temper and modify the blow. Elsie shivered on the brink of this inevitable revelation to the egotistic but fond, trusting mother, as a swimmer pauses and hesitates, trembling on the bank, ere plunging into the icy waters, when compelled to cross a river in the early spring. But the courage brought by resolute will to the point, in he leaps, and in battling with the rude waters, the chill he dreaded but serves as a stimulus to more vigorous effort, and he finds a power and increasing energy coming to him in proportion to the perils and difficulties he has to encounter. Thus Miss Hastings found power and ability in writing this much-feared letter, so that she was able to deftly expose the great wrong, not to call it by a harsher name, of which her friend was the victim without unnecessarily wounding the mother through the son. She read it over carefully and was herself surprised and gratified at the felicity of expression and happy choice of phrase in which she had been able to say what was in her heart without giving one more pang than was unavoidable to this hitherto unsuspecting, deluded lady. It had been the hardest and least congenial task of her life to write that letter, and she felt as if somehow she had been helped to accomplish it by some occult influence, some good spirit who had responded to her unbreathed prayer for help; for Elsie, like many other earnest, conscientious children of humanity, felt frequently as if unseen agencies acted for and with her to help her for good. And does not some such feeling or impression form the basis of religion? Is it not indeed the very soul and essential quality of what is called by some the *religious instinct?*

## CHAPTER XLI.

### A NEW PATIENT.

Dr. Seaman had a new patient. Gretchen was sick. The fat, jolly, even-tempered woman was very ill indeed, and required the physician's most watchful attendance. It proved to be a case of typhoid fever. Poor Hans was almost wild with anxiety about his mother, and often trudged the two miles or so between the doctor's house and the little cottage to urge the physician to hasten his visit. Careless as he had been about vexing her by his indulgence in schnapps while she was well, now, when there was a possibility that she might be lost to him, his grief knew no bounds.

"Oh, Dr. Seaman, you must please save mine mudder; she is mine only mudder, you see, an' I can't live without her," said the poor fellow on one of these visits, wringing his hands in agony.

As for Hiram, he smoked his pipe as usual, looked contemplative, and altogether bore the matter like a philosopher.

"It's me private 'pinion," he sententiously remarked to Warren when the disease seemed to be steadily gaining on the patient, and poor Gretchen's life to hang indeed in the balance, "thet the ole woman'll weather the gale, cos, as you say, the fever is a-gaining rapidly. Naow, Gretchen is, in my mind, too fat to go very fast, and so in the natur' of things thet fever'll get the worst of it. Sure's you live, it'll hev to leave her behind, doctor, for you never could hurry up Gretchen a peg; she'll go so fast, an' no faster. Gretch-

en's the smartest woman to go slow of anyone in these diggin's," and the trapper looked comically at the medical man, as he spoke, at the same time shaking his head in a satisfied sort of way.

However, in spite of his philosophic bearing, Warren knew that beneath the rugged exterior there was a very warm feeling for the sick woman, and that no sacrifice of personal comfort would be deemed too great to give her aid or relief.

The "Giraffe" was fairly tireless, and never seemed to rest, but was always on the alert to do anything the medical man required.

Elsie, on the first intimation of the sickness, had hastened to the cottage, and contributed much to the comfort of the patient by her womanly tact and ability to make the sick-room cheerful and wholesome. Hiram was quite satisfied when she was near.

"Somebody's always got to be sick, you see, Miss Elsie, an' I reckon't mought as well be Gretchen as the next one; leastwise, she's the one this time anyhow, an' you got your turn a while back. Guess it's all right."

And so the weary days of the fever went by, kind hearts prompting, kind hands doing for the sick one all that was possible. Elsie rarely failed in seeing the sufferer once a day, and sometimes twice, taking usually some trifling thing which she thought might be needed or acceptable.

It was in the second week of the sickness, when just as she reached the clump of cedars near the trapper's home, walking as she often did when the weather was favorable and roads fairly good, she heard her name softly pronounced, and turning quickly, met the earnest gaze of the younger Russian. She colored with pleasure, and held out her hand. Eagerly he grasped it.

"Miss Hastings, I need not say how delighted I am to

meet you again; to meet you, too, on a mission of kindness to my old friend Gretchen."

As he spoke he held her hand in a warm grasp, almost unconsciously retaining it, so pleased did he seem to see her.

"Where have you been hiding yourself, Mr. Adolph? Your friends have been in despair about you, thinking perhaps you had forgotten them," she rejoined, half earnestly, half gayly.

"Forgotten you!" And here he bent his eyes so earnestly upon her that involuntarily she looked down for a moment, and to her secret annoyance felt her face suffused with the warm, rich blush. "I went away," he said, very quietly, "and tried to forget, tried to study, tried a great many things, but it would not do;" and then he added, as if trying to explain his rather ambiguous phrases, "my father is very old, you know. I must not leave him. It would not be right, would it?"

Her self-possession, which had momentarily deserted her during his almost impassioned address, now returned, and she answered archly: "Why, no; of course it would not be right. But why should you seek to leave him, and your friends too? And as for trying to forget, surely your memories are not so very dreadful that you must try and fly from them! I thought Mr. Adolph was afraid of nothing."

Her half raillery roused him, and he responded in the same vein, or tried to, for his attempt was a partial failure, and she felt that some emotion was stirring his nature to the very depths.

"But how is Gretchen, Mr. Adolph; you have just come from the cottage? She has been very, very ill."

"Yes, and you have been the good angel there, too. I thank you, I thank you," he repeated. "I think she is better, at least she was resting nicely; she has indeed been very ill."

Then he told her how he had been to the great city, with

the half-formed intention of following out a course of study in one of the institutions there, but found it impossible to tame his longing for father, home, and friends.

"I know you will think this a strange, perhaps ignoble feeling for one no longer in the blush of youth, who ought by this time to be somewhat hardened by the experience of years," he said, hesitatingly, almost pleadingly, she thought, as if he would deprecate in advance any blame she might impute to his want of courage; "but remember I am almost a savage, and have the instincts and habits of a savage; and the home ties are too strong to be easily severed."

She regarded the speaker smilingly. "If love of home and friends is the characteristic of a savage, and impaired by our civilization, Mr. Adolph, then, I say perish the civilization, for what, after all, is culture, learning, books, training, compared with the sacred feeling of love of home and kindred?"

"Do you really feel so, and can regard what I have been afraid was a shameful weakness with leniency and allowance? But I cannot so readily forgive myself for what I feel was a weakness."

"Is it not really a question of duty?" she asked in a low tone. "Is not your place here, where your aged father lives, and who must mourn your absence? Filial duty is surely before any desire for mere personal good."

His head sunk for an instant, as if he were weighing her words, and then looking up he said, simply: "I believe you are right; I was selfish to go, and yet—but my father must not be left to pine alone."

"But what led you to go so far away from home; surely you could have found what you seek much nearer?" she asked, as they walked in the direction of the cottage, for hitherto they had been standing by the clump of maples where they first met.

"Well, I will confess," he answered, slowly, as if half doubtful as to how his communication might be received, and his mood was almost feverishly sensitive to her criticism. "I wrote a short article on a certain rare and curious plant which I discovered some miles from here, and sent it to the editor of the *Natural Science Journal* your father lent me. You look surprised at my doing such a rash thing, and indeed I felt as if I had made a foolish blunder in doing so, as soon as the letter was posted, for I reflected that although the plant might seem rare and curious to me, yet it might be very familiar to botanists."

She had indeed showed astonishment in her look, but it was a pleased surprise, and as he paused, said quickly: "I am so glad; and what was the result—did they publish it?"

"To my great astonishment it came out in the next issue, and by post there came a complimentary note from the editor congratulating me on adding a new plant to the flora of the country."

"How delightful! Let me wish you joy!" exclaimed Elsie, holding out her hand and clasping his warmly. "I was sure your great knowledge of these things would come to something sooner or later; but please go on."

"There is not much more to tell, only that we had some further correspondence, and in response to one of my questions he suggested that I should go to New York and take a short course in the institution in which he occupies a chair as professor of the anatomy and physiology of plants."

"Just the thing you were wishing for, was it not?"

"Yes, and in my then condition of mind I eagerly accepted the invitation, but I overestimated my own strength of resolution, and a few days showed me my weakness, as my being here shows it to you."

A larger, fuller meaning than his words expressed was in his face, and with swift intuition Elsie read it there, and to

her great annoyance felt her color rising; and somehow an awkward silence chained her lips, and neither spoke further until the cottage was reached.

They found the "Giraffe" sitting in contemplative mood outside, with a pipe in his mouth out of which the fire had departed. He seemed to be in a "brown-study," to use a favorite expression of Elsie's father, and did not notice their approach, but on their attempting to enter the dwelling he started up like a watch-dog on the alert.

"Oh, oh! Miss Elsie, mebbe Carl an' me ain't glad to see yer!" referring to his dog, a rather shaggy specimen of canine fidelity, which now ran up and began to frisk and gambol as if to speak for himself. "An' friend Adolph, too, he 'members yer both, he does. Bless yer, why, thet dog knows more'n most humans. When Gretchen took ailing like, ses I, 'Carl, no more barkin', 'cause Gretchen's kinder twisted up an' wants no noise,' an' he sorter put his squirrel-trap on one side, knowing like, an' wagged his tail, an' durn me ef he's barked sence; knows more'n most humans."

Elsie stroked the faithful creature, who was, she knew, uncommonly sagacious. Hiram's eyes twinkled with satisfaction, for with him, as with most hunters and sportsmen generally, it was indeed "love me, love my dog."

"He's a rare 'un, Miss Elsie, he is. But I'm sorter on-easy in my mind 'bout the ole woman," he went on, the absorbed, half-troubled look he wore when they arrived coming back to his rugged face. "She's kind o' flighty this morning, and raves for the Chief to come and see her, and I was a-thinking, as yer come up, friend Adolph, thet maybe the ole man would come up an' sorter soothe her—leastwise, he mought try. She allers believed in him, an' I feel kinder sure 't'll do her good."

"If you think so, Hiram, I am sure father will try and come. Of course," he added, to Elsie, "I am cautious

about urging or advising him to expose himself to any undue emotion or excitement, for we all realize that at his advanced period of life his hold on earth is very slight, and an even, nearly monotonous, existence is almost imperatively necessary."

"I understand that; and yet, is there not an equal or even greater peril in permitting the emotions and feelings to remain quite dormant? Is there not danger of unhealthy stagnation if the pool of the inner and better life is not occasionally ruffled by the presence of the angel of compassion?" she said, quietly. "But your father, of all men, is not likely to suffer in that way."

Adolph smiled in the half-deferential, half-humorous way which she had often observed in him when he was impressed with some thought bordering on the ludicrous as he quickly responded: "True; you understand him, for, singularly enough, it was only yesterday that he was quite excited about something that was related in his presence which aroused his pity and indignation, with the usual result that he was obliged to lie down to recover the vital tone he had thus lost. However, he recruited quickly, and on sitting up, said, pathetically, "I am afraid I shall never live to be an old man, unless I learn to control myself better," adding to himself: "But little hope of that, unless I become both blind and deaf."

Elsie laughed heartily, and the "Giraffe" haw-hawed until the welkin rang with the echoes.

"He is younger than many men at a third of his years. What a glorious thing such a beautiful old age is! How very few are so favored."

"Yes," Adolph said, and she always noticed that his eyes glowed with a peculiarly tender light when speaking of his venerable parent. "I suppose there have not been many who have breasted the storms of life for nearly a century and a quarter, but father thinks many more have

lived to great age than history takes note of, and indeed holds that most of the race, if fairly well born and circumstanced, are capable of it, and that premature decay is the penalty of transgression of nature's laws."

Poor Gretchen was very low, and took little notice of anything, and yet Dr. Seaman, on his visit the previous evening, had pronounced her better, although not yet out of danger. She had, as Hiram had said, been a little wandering in her mind, but when Elsie took her hand she smiled a recognition and pressed her fingers gratefully.

"I have been so sick, an' mine body feels so weak," she murmured, as Elsie bent her head to catch the low accents.

Very different indeed she looked from the plump, hearty, good-natured woman of a few weeks before. However, all felt more cheerful, for she was undoubtedly better, and said so. But, with the whim of a sick person, she kept inquiring every few moments when the old Chief was coming, as she wanted to have some good sleep, and then she would begin to get well.

"Strange that she should have this notion so strong about my father's ability to give her sleep; but then he certainly has some power in that way. I have seen him calm patients at once by simply laying his hand on their heads when tossing in all the wild restlessness of delirious fever."

"I, too, can speak on that point, for never shall I forget the restfulness of his touch when I was suffering from my accident at your home," returned Elsie, with warmth. "Do try and induce him to come and help poor Gretchen —that is," she added, quickly, "if it will not imperil his own health."

"Oh, it will not be near so difficult to induce him to come, when he knows Gretchen wishes him, than to keep him at home," laughingly assented Adolph, as he promised that his father should be with the sick one the next morning, if possible.

Rarely had the young mistress of the Hermitage enjoyed a walk as keenly as the return home that day. It was one of those soft autumn days when the departing summer seems to clasp hands in friendly feeling with the prospective heir to his realm, who has just come, as it were, to spy out the estate over which in brief period he is to reign. There was no rivalry, but the mellow glow of good-fellowship. The air was delightful, and of medium temperature, and Nature smiled cheerily, clad as she was in her bright holiday garb of variegated colors. The scene appealed strongly to the poetic and artistic imagination of Adolph, who had accompanied Elsie, and he spoke with a native eloquence which rather surprised her. This shy, modest, retiring man, with slender education, and few or no opportunities for culture, such as varied society gives, had yet, under such influences as his simple life afforded, developed a strong, nicely balanced, and critical mind in reference to most subjects within the range of his observation. His knowledge of nature's treasures was, as Elsie and her father agreed, much superior to that of any one within their circle of acquaintance.

"Please walk in and take dinner with us," urged the young mistress of the mansion. "You have given me so many new views, this morning, of things which I have often passed hastily over in my walks, that a score of questions arise in my mind which I want to ask you; and, besides, father will be so glad to hear about your New York experience."

"The questions will keep, even supposing I were capable of answering them," said the gentleman, all his shrinking reserve coming back at the thought of the social trial which dinner might involve.

Nervously sensitive regarding conventional proprieties, a natural result of his isolated life, the Russian still hesitated, when at this moment Mr. Hastings himself appeared

on the scene, and would hear of no denial, adding: "We dine alone, and shall be delighted to have you with us; besides, I want to have a talk with you."

Dining alone with these two was very different from forming one of a large, critical company, and so Adolph offered no further opposition.

The dinner was ready soon after entering the house, Elsie having but a few moments for such simple change of toilet as she required; the brief period being spent by the visitor in looking at a new illustrated work recently published on "American horses," a subject in which both host and guest were much interested, for Mr. Hastings was an enthusiastic horseman, and Adolph was very familiar with, and an ardent admirer of, the noble animal.

The Russian thought he never before enjoyed a repast so much as he did that dinner. So urbane and unobtrusively thoughtful was the host, so gracefully attentive the fair hostess, that their guest was entirely at his ease, and conversed with intelligence and freedom on the varied topics suggested. There was a simplicity and naturalness, a genuine unaffected and frank manhood, about the visitor which forcibly impressed the owner of the Hermitage and won his admiration.

"That is the most genuine specimen of a natural gentleman I have ever met. He owes almost nothing to society or the schools, but has a native breeding and innate consciousness of the right thing to do and say," he observed to his daughter as their guest left them about the middle of the afternoon.

Elsie was delighted to hear her father so express himself, for she had feared that some social or race prejudice might, unknown even to himself, have lodgement in his mind unfavorable to these isolated people with whom they had been brought into such curious and intimate relations. The kindness and attention manifested by her parent she

had half feared might be prompted by the sense of the heavy obligation under which he felt he lay to them, and so she was especially gratified to hear his hearty expression of esteem for the individual manly qualities of the younger Russian. For herself, she had followed her intuitions, and apart from the consciousness of heavy indebtedness on her part for help and kindest attention and hospitality in her urgent need—independent of this, we say, she had given the entire Cave family a special and warm place on the hearth-stone of her friendship, and installed them there as favored guests. And as her father was her other life, as it were, she wished him to regard these friends in like manner. Hence her joy at his words. Her pleasure was so evident at what he said, and she kissed him so warmly, saying, "I knew you would inevitably come to that conclusion, father," that it set him thinking, and he felt as one before whose eyes the mist suddenly clears from the horizon.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### THE HEALING POWER.

The sick woman had passed a restless night, and was muttering incoherently, tossing restlessly to and fro, when Dr. Seaman entered the cottage. After a brief examination, he called Hiram aside and inquired gravely if she had been unduly excited in any way the day previous, adding: "She was better, certainly, when I left her yesterday, but this morning is not so well."

"Wall, doctor, it's my 'pinion thet Gretchen's kinder riled 'cause we didn't hev the old man here yesterday. She'd set her mind on't thet he'd sorter soothe her like, an' maybe he would. Women's crooked creeters, an' needs a heap o' soothing at times. But she ain't been 'cited 'cept thet; leastways, not as I knows of, an' I hev been to hum most all the time."

"Whom does she want to see?" asked Seaman, rather abruptly, his professional instinct on the alert to discover if there were any desire to change physicians.

"The old man—the Chief, as they call him; but," added the trapper, cautiously, thinking perhaps he had been imprudent, "mebbe yer don't know him, doctor. He's an old friend o' her'n, an' she's got a sorter conceit thet p'raps he kin cure her by what they call laying on o' hands; leastways, I kalkerlate thet's it. I don't take no stock in sich myself, nohow. I believe in the reg'lar perfession, but I sorter 'magine he kin help, for he's a hull team to soothe, he is, an' is smarter most ways then yer find."

Seaman was reassured as to Hiram's soundness toward

the "reg'lar perfession," but still a little curious to know who this quack could be that professed to cure typhoid fever by "laying on o' hands." Just at this moment a trampling of horses' feet reached his ear, and almost immediately Elsie Hastings dashed up on her favorite Gyp.

"Why, Cousin Warren, I expected to be ahead of you."

"As if that were possible," responded the physician, with mock astonishment. "Such audacity—such egotism, indeed! But, Elsie, do tell me, who is this wonderful layer on of hands, this digital quack, that these people seem so desirous to bring here—at least Gretchen, according to what Hiram tells me, for he still seems to have some conscientious scruples respecting what is due to the 'reg'lar perfession?'"

"Please mind, you conceited son of Æsculapius, whom you are calling a quack. The doctor is coming here this morning, to show you members of the 'reg'lar perfession' how to treat disease, and I'm sure I hope he will do the poor woman good," regarding her cousin's perturbed brow mischievously; "but how is Gretchen?"

"I do not find her so well, and that delirium has returned. But you, too, are leagued against the 'reg'lar perfession' and in favor of quackery. Come now, please tell me who my rival is, so that I can be off and leave him a free field in which to practise his incantations. Of course, I shall have to give up the case."

Seeing her cousin was really annoyed, and thinking she detected the sound of wheels, which possibly might herald the coming visitors, she changed her manner.

"No, you foolish fellow, you will do no such thing as retire from the case. What sticklers you medical men are for professional dignity, as you call it. Don't you know, or must I tell you, that this is the second patient of yours that this quack, as you term him, has treated, and that you have already met him in consultation?"

"What do you mean?" And then, a sudden light breaking on him, he exclaimed: "Surely not the old Russian? How stupid I was not to think of him before. Is he really coming?"

She nodded gayly, and then sprung from her horse, and leaving Hiram to attend to the animal, entered the house with the doctor.

"Then you think you can afford to meet the quack without compromising the dignity of your high mightiness?" she asked, as they paused for an instant in the outer room.

"I shall be pleased to meet the old man again, and shall be glad indeed if his psychological power, which really is wonderful, can soothe poor Gretchen into deep slumber; for that would be a crisis with her, I think, and on awaking she would go on, probably, toward recovery."

"A graceful admission, which I suppose I must allow to offset your outrageous remarks of a few moments since."

The patient could not be roused to recognition, but stared at them wildly, turning uneasily from side to side.

"She is a very sick woman," Seaman said, in answer to the inquiring look of his cousin—"even dangerously so; but this is a peculiar disease, and subject to many ups and downs."

A sound of wheels, and then the voice of Adolph drew them out-of-doors again, where they found the Patriarch looking so kind and genial that Warren whispered: "He resembles a sunshiny day in midwinter."

His face shone with pleasure as Elsie advanced to salute him.

"My dear daughter," he said, as he took both her hands and pressed his lips to her forehead, "how pleasant to meet you again! And how is our friend Gretchen?"

"Not so well, I am sorry to say," said Dr. Seaman, coming forward and shaking hands with the ancient man. "She has, I understand, called for you frequently."

"I helped her through a severe illness many years ago, and she has never forgotten it. I think I always had more or less magnetic influence over her, doctor," he said, as if in partial explanation of his presence on the occasion as a healer, "and you know there are occult influences which largely control the course of certain diseases, although we may not be able to understand clearly how they act."

"Certainly," assented the medical man; yet, perhaps, unconsciously to himself, there was in his manner something of a shrinking from seeming to indorse anything irregular in connection with medical practice. Medical men are called narrow, bigoted, and conservative, and many of them deserve all that can be urged against them in this way, for too often a grave exterior and wise manner cover a woful ignorance and their practice is only a stupid routine. But much can be said in extenuation of the conservatism and rigid attitude of the better and really educated class of the profession when we consider what a frightful imposition and cruel fraud quackery in all its phases has been to the race. It has been in most cases—yes, the vast majority—an unmitigated evil. When we consider what sort of men or women medical frauds are, no language can be too strong in condemning them. They ought to be classed with the soothsayers, astrologers, and exorcists of old times, and treated accordingly. But there have been Natural Healers, and such was undoubtedly the ancient man who now stood by the sick woman's couch trying to soothe her delirious fever and calm her into quiet slumber. She seemed in some way to be sensible of his presence, and grew quieter, as he touched the hot hand, so wasted from its normal plumpness. Asking that all the windows should be opened as widely as possible, he seated himself by the patient, still clasping her hand, and further requested that they be left entirely alone.

"If I were a young and strong man this would not be necessary," he said, apologetically, "for then I could easily

antagonize ulterior influences, and have surplus force sufficient to control my patient; but my age and comparative feebleness render it imperative that I should economize my vital power so as to concentrate all influence on our poor friend here."

"I must say, with all due reverence for our aged friend," observed Dr. Seaman to Elsie, as they stood outside, "that I should think more of his therapeutics if he did not make this show of mystery, and this talk about influences. The presence of one person in the room could not have seriously interfered with the *modus operandi*, whatever it may be."

"Provided that one person were my sapient cousin, M.D.," she replied, quickly, with a mischievous smile.

"Well, yes, I think it is being unnecessarily exclusive, for if there is a special force which can be utilized for healing disease or relieving suffering, it should not be shrouded in mystery, but be made known to the world."

"Why, you most unreasonable of men, didn't the Patriarch explain that it was on account of his great age that he asked to be left alone! Just remember that at one hundred and twenty the powers of life run at a low tide and any distracting influence may be felt seriously."

"Perhaps so," returned the other. "It is a wonderful age, and even a whim ought to be respected in a centenarian."

Adolph had gone off with Hiram and the horses, and he now returned, joining the two cousins.

"Father is in the room with Gretchen, I suppose? Did he turn you all out?" he inquired, with a half smile.

"Yes," returned Miss Hastings; "and my learned medical cousin here was inclined to grumble a little at it until I showed him that at your father's time of life any distracting influence might seriously prejudice his efforts in Gretchen's behalf."

"That is it exactly, otherwise he would, I know, have

been glad of Dr. Seaman's presence in the sick-room; indeed he intimated as much to me as we came along."

"Oh, of course, I understand this is an exceptional case, not an ordinary consultation in any degree, as your father is not a practising physician. But naturally I have a strong curiosity in reference to any treatment of diseased condition, especially as in this case, where the plan pursued is so entirely foreign to my experience and training. But does the Patriarch—pardon my so calling him, but I have heard my cousin here use that title, and it is so adapted to his reverend age—does he never avail himself of the action of drugs?"

"Never," replied the Russian; "he says that drugs are only a clumsy substitute for higher knowledge, and that the practice of the future will be largely mental—the power which a healthy mind, dwelling in a vigorous, sound body, can exert over a weak and sickly one to modify or remove diseased conditions."

"Perhaps such a consummation of all the long labors in the field of medical inquiry and experiment is, for humanity's sake, devoutly to be wished, but it is, I fear, a remote prospect," the physician answered, as if he individually had no great faith in such a prophecy.

"Father's step," suddenly remarked Adolph, and all arose from the rustic seats in the little arbor at the southern exposure of the cottage—covered in the flush of the season with a trellis-work of vines, now partially withered—as the venerable man issued from the dwelling and came slowly toward them. Saluting the group in his old-fashioned, courteous manner, he seated himself in their midst, and without speaking closed his eyes as if weary.

For a brief space no word was said, and then the silence was broken by Dr. Seaman saying softly to Adolph: "Perhaps your father had better be left alone for a short time, as he looks tired and may wish to rest."

With that marvellous activity of the senses which Seaman had noticed before, the Patriarch heard the low tone and answered himself without, however, opening his eyes: "Not so, my son; I shall gather strength from you all, aided by the genial influences of this nectar-like air. There, I am all right again;" and with the words, he looked up and smiled at the little group. Then addressing Elsie: "My daughter, just step in and see Gretchen and bring us a report of her condition now as you find it, and we will quietly await your return before resuming conversation."

Elsie, without speaking, disappeared inside the cottage, and not a word was spoken until her return, nor did Seaman feel any desire to break the silence, for as he remarked afterward, "In the presence of that wonderful old man I feel as if I no longer had volition, but was under the spell of another mind, my own will being in abeyance."

"Gretchen is resting so sweetly, with her eyes closed, that I did not dare to speak to her for fear she might be sleeping, and she does need the rest so much. You have worked a miracle on her, and we all feel so grateful to you for coming, said Elsie, upon her return."

Those smiling eyes, set so deeply in the aged face, regarded her fixedly for an instant.

"No, my child, not a miracle; there is no miracle. I merely brought my nature in its healthy, quiet, and unperturbed life into mental and spiritual relation with the storm-tossed, feverish, and restless being of our sick friend; and as nature always seeks equilibrium and rest, although her manifestations in constant change may seem to indicate the reverse, our patient soon yielded to such influence as I was able to bring to bear on her disturbed conditions, and she sank into restful slumber." Adding, after a pause, "You can each of you do likewise if you will pay the price for such power. My drugs and medicamenta are less palpable and tangible than those used by our young friend here, but just

as definite in their physiological action, only such action is secondary to the higher or psychical force exerted by my peculiar methods of healing."

"But," eagerly inquired the physician, "if there exists such a force as you speak of and indeed seem to possess, why do so few appear to be gifted with it? I have certainly heard of these mind-healers, among religious people termed 'faith-curers,' since I remember, but concluded naturally that they were either impostors deceiving for gain or else fanatics working on the imagination—in any case deceivers or deceived. But you invest the matter with a reality I did not suppose it possessed."

"No doubt, my young friend, there are many frauds in this way, but the existence of the clever or even crude counterfeit coin proves, does it not, the existence and value of the real? It is rarely that the false or inferior is counterfeited, the good can scarcely escape it, for the instinctive hunger of humanity for truth is such that they will accept an imitation rather than absolutely starve, and as in even the very coarsest vegetables and grains there is some nutriment, so you will find that whatever has, under the form of mental or spiritual food, or cure for diseased physical conditions, been offered through the ages and been largely accepted by them, has had something in it to satisfy their needs, and arrest in some degree the famine that was consuming them. In short, a fuller experience will show you that nothing that takes hold of human life in any large degree is entirely evil. The instinct of the inferior creatures guards them, generally, against being poisoned, although occasionally they will eat what gives them pain and suffering, and perhaps death; but, as a rule, the absolutely poisonous plants are strictly avoided. So, to some extent, with our race; and the less cultivated, the lower in the scale, the more, perhaps, this unreflecting tendency will save them from going wholly astray, however wildly for a time

they may wander from the right road. However, this is somewhat of a digression, and intended to remind you that invariably a modicum of good exists in things evil. Speaking more particularly of this psychic power in its healing action or influence over disturbed physical conditions, I will say that it is much more common than you suppose. That indeed all true physicians have it to a greater or less extent, and just in proportion to their real success. But its realm of action is vastly larger and more extended than the ordinarily acknowledged field of therapeutics, for it is operating everywhere in our social and domestic life to restore and heal, to lift up, to succor, to save. Other things and agencies being estimated at their full value in the sick-room, I would still insist that the patient's restoration to health depends very largely on the degree of vigor and health, freedom from anxiety, and cheerfulness of the people about him. If they are hopeful, sanguine, calm in spirit, and of what we term a happy frame of mind, and this supplemented by a good degree of physical health, then the patient is under the best conditions for recovery. For there is a subtile influence going continually from the healthy, cheerful nurse, doctor, or friend to buoy up and tide the sick one over the weak places where his tottering feet might stumble, and a fall destroy him. This unseen, unsuspected vital energizing, something so subtile as to elude our most searching analysis, is beyond all pills, powders, potions, draughts, and other medicamenta subject to sensual perception; for these latter are but weak symbols of this—the true 'vis medicatrix.'"

"Then I infer," said Seaman, who had listened with respectful attention to the aged speaker, "that you would never permit a weak or sickly person to be in attendance upon the sick in any capacity whatsoever?"

"Exactly what I would teach and emphasize with all authority possible, for according to the degree of vigor in

the attendants will the sick person's chances of restoration be enhanced or lessened."

"I heartily agree with you; and for this reason, how much better to have healthy trained nurses instead of depressed, anxious, and often half-invalid relatives or friends to take charge of the sick-room!" responded the physician, warmly.

"I think I understand," said Elsie, speaking for the first time since the conversation began, "how that the relatives naturally suppose that their affection and devotion will enable them to fill the position of attendant as no stranger could do, not knowing that they are, if depressed or feeble, or both, really exhausting the vitality and lessening the chances of the dear one."

"You have aptly and clearly expressed my idea, my child, and when the world sees this truth in relation to the sick it will have taken an important step toward that blessed period in the future history of our planet, when through a better understanding of the laws which govern vital action sickness will be unknown," rejoined the old man, gazing with a gratified air on the young lady.

"If you are not too tired I would like to ask another question or so," said Seaman.

"It is not fatiguing to me to converse in this way on such subjects, and I shall be pleased to answer if I can, any questions on this or other topics on which you seek light. But suppose, doctor, you first step in and see the patient and give us the benefit of your opinion on her present condition?"

"Certainly," and the medical man entered the dwelling, returning in about five minutes. "I am happy to state that Gretchen is doing well, and at present sleeping, apparently not having awakened since Elsie saw her, and that is Hiram's statement too, sitting within call. Her temperature is almost normal, and that feverish restlessness is hardly

noticeable. What she needed was tranquillizing slumber, and that she is now enjoying. You have succeeded, apparently, in calming that hypersensitive state into which she had fallen, and that is the greatest boon you could confer."

"I rejoice to hear you speak so favorably, doctor, and am satisfied that if this sleep continues an hour or so longer the crisis will be passed. Do you not agree with me?"

Seaman promptly answered: "Yes, I feel she will be out of danger, if she can only rest as she is now doing for a while longer. But I must hasten to ask my questions, as I have some pressing claims upon my attention, many miles from here. I wish to ask, How can this power which you seem to possess over disturbed physical or mental states be acquired, if that is possible, or is it only the natural gift of a chosen few, like the faculty for music, for instance?"

"The power you speak of, my son," the old man answered, deliberately, after a short pause, "is the natural fruit of the tree of life—the necessary sequence of large repeated life—and may be manifested in one as music; in another, as artistic power; in a third, as wonderful eloquence; or it may be exhibited as phenomenal literary ability; or, as in the cases you have more immediately alluded to, as exceptional control over disease, commonly called natural healing power. But it is one and the self-same thing in all these manifestations. Thus, Handel and Mozart, Angelo and Raphael, Demosthenes and Cicero, Shakespeare and Goethe, not to mention other examples which will easily occur to you, were the natural and necessary outcome of somewhat similar conditions, and through these varied channels, and by such different modes, manifested a power which was remarkable, and, until we come to understand the laws of its growth, perplexing and bewildering. But, my friends, these phenomenal members of our race are simply older men, who give us the garnered harvestings of many life-fields. Were this their first or even

second arrival on our planet, they could not show such exceptional ability. Nature works slowly, and takes long, long periods to produce a diamond, or an amethyst, or any other thing of rare quality and value ; and shall she do less by mind, by soul, by spirit, by all that combination of wondrous elements which are found in the leaders of our race? These gifted ones have been here before, and had probably many birthdays on this planet, and it is this repeated experience of our earth-life which has developed and sharpened their powers, and given them that keenness of perception and marked ability which distinguishes them from their fellows. They have graduated so often at the same school, that they can easily take the honors. But my young friend the doctor is, I fear, laughing at my theories, as he will term them, esteeming them but as the vagaries of senility." For the medical man had smiled broadly during the last sentence or so, and now started almost superstitiously ; for he was sitting so that the speaker could not see his face, and besides, the eyes of the Patriarch had been closed, as was his wont frequently when speaking continuously for any length of time. Before Seaman, who was somewhat confused, could answer, the old man remarked, "I did not see you smile, my son, but felt it, for sight and vision do not pertain only to the eyes ; knowledge may arrive at the mind by many channels."

"Pardon me, my dear sir, I only smiled at the novelty of the thoughts, and at the curious fancies to which they gave rise in my mind. Pray go on, for I am really much interested. But may I ask if we are to infer, from what you have said, that you think these special men, Shakespeare, Goethe, etc., have been born into the world again and again, until they have reached the degree of superior development which so astonishes and delights us? But the thought naturally occurs, why should they be thus distinguished above others. For, if it is the continual rebirth

which gradually gives them superiority, they were originally no higher than their fellows; and why have they been thus favored?"

The Patriarch regarded the little group before him with a benevolent half smile. "Only those are reborn on our planet who lack something in their development that earth alone can give. Each world in the universe of being has some special part to perform in the training and development of sentient beings, and no other can take the place of ours in affording this essential 'something' to the beings who have once reached this stage of their growth in their upward progress. It may be that this necessary quality is of a moral or spiritual nature—I hardly think it is merely intellectual, as that can be developed in other spheres of action equally well. However, be it what it may, the absence of it on leaving this stage would necessitate a return by rebirth. This must be repeated until the lesson is learned, and then the soul will pass on to the next stage of being. Now, the intellectual power which attracts so much admiration here is incidental merely, and a result of these repeated experiences."

"Then, father," quietly asked Elsie, who had been absorbed in attention, "we are not to understand that all return to earth after death?"

"By no means, my daughter; a considerable number of those who return are the souls which have prematurely passed through death's portals, before sufficient earthly years had been theirs to give them the growth possible to be obtained here. Many are the spirits of those who, though living out the full tale of years, yet through indolence or obeying low instincts, did not progress, and so remained as children, only lacking the purity and innocence of that condition, but children so far as development in the higher lines of life is concerned—morally and spiritually."

Here the doctor rose, saying: "Thank you ever so much

for answering my questions. You have given me something to think about during my ride, for the time warns me I must be off. Perhaps, when I have been born a few more times, I shall be able to cure my patients without visiting them at all, by mere effort of the will. Who knows? I do hope I shall be privileged soon again to hear you on these, to me, very interesting subjects." Clasping the hand of the aged man warmly, and then successively those of Elsie and Adolph with "Good-by," Seaman drove rapidly away. This broke up the party, and all were soon wending their several ways homeward.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### A NEW DEPARTURE.

The good-humored Dutch woman awoke from her life-saving slumber about four o'clock in the afternoon of the day the Patriarch visited her with such soothing effect, and exclaimed at once: "Hiram, mine husband, I vas better; that old man am goot. Is my boy Hans here, somewheres?"

Poor Hans, who had been half demented at the thought of his mother's peril, spending a large part of his time in passing between the Hermitage and the cottage, happened to be in the adjoining room, and at once came in on hearing the welcome voice. He kissed the sick woman fondly, and danced around the room for joy. If, as Hiram had expressed it, he had before been "like a wet chicken," he now acted like chanticleer at sunrise, and could hardly restrain the exuberance of his joy.

Yes, Gretchen went on to convalescence without a single mishap, and excepting the loss of some forty pounds from her rotundity of form, soon was as well as ever, and considerably more active than she had been for years. Singularly enough, Hiram had gained just about as much flesh as his wife had lost, no doubt from the sedentary life he had been compelled to live during the long weeks of sickness. It improved his appearance much, relieving somewhat the gauntness of his general aspect.

"Blamed if it ain't curus! no loss anyhow, sense it's still in the family; guess Gretchen could spare the fat better'n I could, an' sense it's come my way, guess I kin take care

of it for her," he said, with a characteristic grimace, when congratulated on his physical gain.

"Mine blessed Mees Elsie, how goot you have been to me! I should die only for you und the one dear old man. Have you seen the old man soon, Miss Elsie?" said the talkative convalescent, as the young lady seated herself after her walk on one of her visits to the cottage shortly after Gretchen was able to leave her bed and move about in the muscularly feeble way that naturally follows a lengthened period of forced inactivity.

"Yes, Gretchen; but you keep your seat. You are yet too weak to be moving about so much. Let your visitors wait on themselves. I saw Mr. Kuprianoff yesterday and had a delightful talk with him. He was up at the Hermitage."

"Ha! ha! dot is so goot! Dear old man." And then, with a meaning smile, "An' the oder one, Meester Adolph, you see him too, Mees Elsie?"

The smile more than the words brought a vivid blush to the cheek of the fair visitor, as she answered: "Yes, you know, Gretchen, such an aged man could not come alone. He needs his son to take care of him. But, how are you feeling to-day?"

"First rate, very goot;" then reverting to the other topic, as if determined not to let Elsie change the conversation until she had solved some point in her mind, "Mr. Adolph is one splendid goot man. Hans—you know what a fine boy mine Hans is, Mees Elsie?—Hans say Mr. Adolph is one fine man, most so good as Meester Hastings. Yet."

The visitor was unpleasantly conscious that the twinkling eyes of the merry woman were fixed upon her face with a purpose, and this consciousness gave her cheeks a heightened color that only aggravated the matter.

Gretchen seemed to take exquisite pleasure in singing the praises of the Cave-dwellers, and waxed fairly eloquent

in her peculiar phraseology when dwelling on the virtues of Adolph. It was easy to see that he was a great favorite with the trapper's wife, although she had not, in Elsie's recollection, said very much about him before; his father seemed to hold chief place in her large, motherly heart, next to Hans, of course. Elsie half suspected this unusual praise might be intended to please her, or perhaps to elicit some expression of her feeling toward the younger Russian, so she was very wary in her replies, and allowed the good woman to speak freely out of the fulness of her heart. It seemed that Adolph had during the sickness visited them regularly every day, sometimes even twice a day, bringing them, from time to time, such things as he thought might be needed, and also attended to Hiram's traps for him, bringing in a constant supply of game, the surplus of which, being disposed of by the "Giraffe," yielded a small income to the cottage, sufficient to cover all necessary expenses. He had been truly a friend in need, and deserved gratitude, and Elsie soon perceived this was a large factor in inducing the present outburst of enthusiastic admiration. However, allowing for a little natural over-coloring, Elsie gathered from the rather discursive talk of the trapper's wife many interesting facts, going far to confirm her previous impression as to the exceptionally pure, healthful, natural life led by this isolated and almost unknown family. So outside of common life indeed was theirs that the aged Russian had, according to popular opinion, been dead over half a century, although at one time he had been a well-known if not popular dweller in the neighborhood, owning a fine property in their midst.

Then Gretchen confided to her visitor the fear that she had of Adolph's going away, as he had often spoken of lately, to engage in some business for himself, as he felt that he was wasting his life, and must do something for the world. "My, my, Mees Elsie, it would the old man kill;

that poor old man would be dead quite in one week if Mr. Adolph go."

Elsie here incautiously asked the question as to why he should go, saying that she was sure he led a useful, good life where he was. This gave Gretchen the opportunity she had been longing for, and she confidentially imparted her belief that he was the victim of a hopeless attachment; that a certain young lady had won his heart, and that, despairing of ever winning her, he felt he must abandon the neighborhood and seek a career in which he could drown his memories. All this was told in the compromise English, which lent piquancy to the story, and Elsie, in spite of a conviction that the recital of the rather romantic incidents was for her special benefit, and told at her rather than to her—curious eyes watching her closely all the time—could hardly control her risibilities at the ludicrous gestures and expressions of the jovial and sympathetic speaker.

"Oh, mine Gott, what shall we do all ef Meester Adolph leave us? Hans say—you know Hans, mine fine boy, Mees Elsie?—Hans he say, he go too, an' so I lose mine boy. Oh! oh! how shall I do, mine Gott! I must go too."

This was too much for Elsie, who laughed aloud at the serio-comic aspect of the warm-hearted woman. "Why, Gretchen, what nonsense; you are the drollest and funniest person, when you get started, I ever saw. Why, you are making a mountain out of a molehill. Nobody is going away. I am sure Mr. Adolph would not be so cruel as to leave his father at his time of life."

She would have added more, but at this moment a shadow darkened the doorway, and a well-known voice said, quietly: "Is there room for another friend, or am I intruding on a private conversation?"

The red deepened for an instant on Elsie's cheeks and then receded, leaving her face of almost alabaster paleness.

"Come in, Mr. Adolph," she said, almost timidly, and with a hesitancy unusual to her. "We are glad to see you."

Her womanly instincts made her shrink from the supposition that he had heard her last words to Gretchen, coupled with his name, and might put a wrong construction on them. She wanted to tell him the subject of their conversation, but hardly knew how to begin, when he relieved her embarrassment by saying: "I would not have intruded when I heard you speaking, but knowing my time was limited, wished to bid you both good-by."

"Good-by!" exclaimed both his hearers at once, at the same time changing glances.

"Yes," returned the other, sadly; "I leave for the West to-night. The truth is, I have been offered a position in connection with an exploring and surveying expedition, just organized by the government."

It seemed that Professor Crebbs, who had been placed in charge of the natural science department of the undertaking had been inquiring for someone skilful in wood-craft, and with some practical knowledge of plants, and had appealed to the editor of *Nature*, who at once named Adolph, showing the article he had written. Crebbs promptly wrote, offering him a position upon his staff, and urging his acceptance. "It was just the position to meet my views, for I am too much a child of Nature ever to be able to endure sedentary life of any kind. And yet," he added, putting his hand to his forehead in an abstracted way, "I have a sort of dreamy memory of a past when I was a devoted bookworm, and spent most of my waking hours absorbed in study and contemplation. I do not know how you will regard such a peculiar notion," he said to Elsie, for the conversation was between these two, Gretchen having left the room; "perhaps you will call it a dream, and possibly it may be, for it is but rarely the remembrance comes to me; only, when I am very deeply moved or excited, or physically exhausted,

in the lethargic state which succeeds, I am apt to have this vision of an existence in which I seem to play the principal part, but of which in my ordinary condition I have no knowledge whatsoever. Forgive my talking so much to you about myself in this way, but just as I entered, this vision of other days, so to speak, came to me with such power that I could not help alluding to it."

"Believe me," his hearer answered, with some feeling, "I am intensely interested in such mental phenomena, and would fain know more about the laws which control our lives. I almost envy your experience, for if we really did have a life before this one, as your father insists, it seems too bad to forget it entirely, as certainly most of us do."

"Yet I feel half ashamed of myself for introducing such a subject now; but one's feelings are not always under control, and to-day, somehow, serious, if not sombre, thoughts are uppermost. I know it sounds childish, but leaving you all here goes rather hard with——"

His voice was husky, as he turned aside for a moment to recover himself.

"But you will return shortly—in a few weeks at most?"

"I may never return," he replied, sadly—"that is, for permanent residence. Of course"—noting her look of inquiring astonishment—"I shall probably take a flying trip occasionally to see my father and—and"—he stammered painfully, as if unable to proceed, and then getting control of thoughts and tongue, as with tremendous effort of will, continued—"my other friends here, if they have not forgotten me."

Elsie both felt and looked more distressed than she could express, and a half feeling of indignation, too, mingled with her emotions, at the apparent wilfulness thus displayed in violently severing these filial and friendly relations for no earthly purpose. "Why, I cannot understand, if it is so distressing for you to leave, and your father so very old—

forgive my saying so, but it doesn't seem quite right," and then all at once she remembered the words of Gretchen, and her lips were chained.

His eyes were wistfully reading, or trying to read, her face, and an expression like the flashing light of morning for a second relieved the melancholy of his countenance, to be only succeeded by still deeper gloom. "If I dared think—— But no, I am a fool," he said, almost harshly, as if chiding his inner self. "Forgive me. It is, indeed, like cutting off my hand to go away. But my life is vacant here, my way is hedged up, my horizon draws in so closely that I no longer seem to have a landscape. I feel that I must burst the bonds that bind me, even if my heart-strings are snapped in the attempt."

He spoke with an impetuosity that was foreign to his usually quiet, self-contained manner, but she had long suspected that latent power and volcanic energy lay behind this placid exterior, although the iron will had hitherto, with one or two slight exceptions—mere whisperings of possible storms—held these spirit-surgings rigorously in check. She never could resist the feeling, when in his company, of the presence of tremendous possibility of force and potency of action held in and controlled by masterly self-command.

What a complex problem human nature is! How many a calm-faced individual we meet who has centuries of wondrous experience behind him. He the living faucet of a stream of tendencies which has flowed on and on through those past generations of ancestors. He lives and moves placidly enough in the present, but his source of far-off supply is the mountain-lake of a savage era tossed by the whirling storms of human passion. Quiet, respectable, civilized, he walks to and fro unruffled amid the stupid ways of ordinary men. But beware should circumstances or soul-stirring experiences rouse the pent-up forces slum-

bering there, or a transformation scene may confront you with all the untamable fury and ruthlessness of a torrid simoon. Humanity is pliable and dull enough in many of its phases, commonplace, too, in its ordinary manifestations, but not the dough we sometimes deem it, by any means, receiving the print of our clasping fingers for weal or woe, in pity or in anger, without emotion. There are tearless eyes fixed with burning glances upon those often thoughtlessly made finger-marks of ours, and behind the eyes, brains full to the brim with the passionate instincts of a forgotten but yet potent past, and hot with wild tendencies to rudely but effectually wipe out and forever obliterate those careless, but, as you thought, perhaps, indelible impressions. Yes, the markings and tracings, the rules and laws of society, the restrictions of civilized life, are, after all, in many cases but the gilt, or varnish, or veneering laid with more or less skill upon a deep background of savagery. The temperate zones which thinly belt the mighty torrid region and are atmospherically governed by the ceaseless pulsations of its fiery heart are liable at any moment to be invaded by the destroying agencies which seethe and boil and sputter in the vast caldron heated by those unseen fires. Nothing in nature so misunderstood, so mismeasured, as man ; and to this ignorance is due our astonishment and dismay when revolutions and riots, and fearful wars, and carnage and massacres, reveal for a moment the underlying fires beneath our feet, and over which we walk so securely day by day. But what has this got to do with our story, with the Russian or the heiress of the Hermitage? Merely the reminder that each individual is a special study, and liable to spring surprises upon you at any moment. That he is not alone, segregated and cut off from the past, but represents the feelings, emotions, tendencies, peculiarities, vices, and virtues of an antecedent host of other individuals, called ancestors. So, treat him as you would an

ambassador from a foreign and unseen, but yet real, constituency, which he represents, and in whose name he speaks.

The Latin and Slavonic races spoke in the man standing by Elsie Hastings, his whole frame swelling with the emotions which overpowered him—too strong to be controlled, and yet too deep to find relief in words. His eyes dilated like those of some poor hunted denizen of the woods brought to bay by the hounds, with their cruel, pitiless glare and long, red, hungry jaws. It looks on either side, but the open, cavernous mouths, with the gleaming white teeth and sanguinary, ravenous tongues, lapping, in anticipation, the warm blood of the victim, meet it in close-gathering folds of remorseless destruction. She saw the strong agony of his vigorous nature as he seemed to wrestle with invisible enemies, which he felt were rapidly worsting him in the contest. To see a brave swimmer carried down-stream and submerged by a strong undertow which shows not to the observer, and only suggests its presence by the frantic contortions and efforts to resist its influence made by him who struggles fiercely, madly, despairingly against it—fills us with pity and sympathetic suffering similar to what the observer felt now. There was the warm Italian blood fiercely leaping through his veins, inflaming and goading him to make everything subservient to the passionate emotion of the moment. But there was countering this the strength and moral integrity which we often find among the better products of that much-enduring race which has spread its rule over so large a section of Europe and Asia.

Yes, right or wrong, this representative of two great branches of the mighty Aryan family—the ancient stock whose qualities, modified and moulded by long centuries of varied experience, with such diverse results in North and South—this Russian had decided to sacrifice inclination,

affection, home, and everything which apparently made life for him worth having on the altar of an almost puritanic conscience.

Elsie felt rather than knew this when Adolph at length turned toward her again with a calm face and the old smile, and retraced the steps he had unconsciously taken when in the throes of the mental contest through which he had been passing. "Pardon me, my dear friend—I have conquered, I am myself again. Thank God, the agony of death is past; I can leave you—that is"—with something of the former hesitancy returning—"I can leave home and carry out my resolution. We all have our hours of weakness, you know, and I have just had one of mine, and it seemed as if for the moment the iron hand of cruel Destiny had me by the throat and was shutting off the sweet breath of life. I regret that perhaps I have made you suffer"—for the tears which had sprung unbidden to her eyes and were not yet dry on her cheek caught his glance—"for your warm heart feels for every pain. I do not very often lose my self-command," he said, deprecatingly. "I came to say a cheerful good-by, and I have cast a gloom over your spirits by my weakness. Please to forget it, and let me walk toward home with you—it is on my way, and I would like to say good-by to your father. Gretchen, good friend, where are you?—I must say farewell."

The trapper's wife entered with a little basket which she insisted on his taking, containing, as she informed him, some special products of her culinary skill which would do for his lunch. He accepted it, as Elsie saw, not to offend the kind feeling which prompted the worthy soul in giving it.

"Goot-by—goot-by. Hans vill go crazy, he vill," she ejaculated, between her sobs, casting, as Elsie thought, reproachful glances in her direction, as if she were in some degree accountable for this calamity. But sorrow for any length of time was impossible to the sunny, hopeful nature

of the jovial old Dutchwoman, and so before Adolph crossed the threshold she had dried her tears and was calling out to him : "Now, Meester Adolph, you moost coome back soon quick an' see Miss Elsie an' your fader an' your friends."

"All right—I'll not forget any of my friends, Gretchen," said Adolph, hoping to draw off Elsie's attention from the rather personal nature of the old woman's last remark, and which he feared might annoy her.

The walk to the Hermitage from the cottage usually occupied Elsie three-fourths of an hour, but on this occasion more than an hour elapsed, so slowly did they proceed. Adolph had much to tell about his plans, and also of the work they were going to engage in. It seemed that the party was destined for Southern New Mexico, where they were to spend the winter, at or in the vicinity of the United States camp located there. The climate would permit their working nearly all winter, principally in geological investigations, and in preparing for the coming spring and summer campaign. Her companion seemed full of his topic, but Elsie could see that he dwelt on these matters in order to avoid reverting to more painful ones, doubtless fearing a return of the emotions which had so nearly overcome him a short time since. "But," she asked, finally, when he had given a somewhat glowing description of the country and work before them, "is there not great peril from those dreadful Apaches and other Indian tribes about there?"

"Oh, there are plenty of the red men there, no doubt," and she thought she discerned a gleam in his eyes and a ring in his voice, as if the excitement of this danger were one of the fascinations of the expedition, as affording a possible distraction to the restless, feverish something which seemed to be undermining his peace.

That walk was never forgotten by either of them, but remained as a deep line or thread having a peculiar tint of

its own and quite different from the rest of the woof which Time with his rapid shuttle wove into the warp of their lives. And yet it was not for what was said, as, apart from Adolph's sketches of the new work and settlement, the conversation was filled with commonplaces, but there was a deep undercurrent of thought and feeling and question and answer going on, which filled hearts and minds to running over, and made days and weeks of preceding and after ordinary life seem cheap and barren and desert-like in comparison. Truly, "we live in thoughts, not years; in feelings, not in figures on a dial," and "should count time by heart-throbs." There are times of exalted perception when we become clairvoyant and read souls, not pages of print, and hear thoughts, not the mere verbal expression of them; when intent, wish, will, spiritual aspiration take form as pictures on the walls of the mind's gallery, through which another mind may wander unmolested; when the spirit breathings reach the spirit ear in syllabified form too fine, too attenuated, too ethereal to affect the coarser sense, but to the inner perception floats intelligence, as by whispers of paradise.

"Promise me that you will not risk your life recklessly among those savages. I speak for your father's sake." And seeing the gratified expression on his face fade to blank disappointment at the conclusion of her sentence, she added, "For mine too, for you have been truly a friend in need to me, and believe me, I have not or shall not forget it. But your father must feel this separation much, and the consciousness that you were in daily peril would, I fear, wear the frail string on which his life hangs until it snapped."

They were standing at the gate of her home, where they had often stood before, but in other and more hopeful moods, and both felt the bitter contrast. She pleaded almost tearfully with him—this wilful, strong man going far

away, under an uncontrollable impulse, and in that temper of mind which often induces noble spirits to fling themselves into the very jaws of death, in a reckless disregard of a life which, for some cause or another, has lost present value to them. She felt this, and all her pitying womanhood was in arms to try and save him for home and friends.

"Why should I be careful of a life which has but little value for me or any human being?" he said, hoarsely, bitterly.

"Every life is valuable, and such sentiments are not like you, and do not represent your true thought. Whatever the cause which induces this sudden resolve to abandon home and friends, of course I do not know, but I have faith enough in you to believe it is a sufficient one, yet I know the claims upon you here and cannot but believe that before long you will feel their weight, and return to us. Promise me what I ask you?" and she laid her hand upon his arm.

"I can refuse you nothing, and yet I would rather not have made a promise which in such a region may seriously trammel me. I do promise you that I will not recklessly endanger my life. But now, in return you will promise me something?" and he regarded her questioningly.

"I will," she said, frankly, "anything in reason."

"Promise me that you will see my father now and then. Ivan will take my place and be a son to him, but he loves your presence, and it will be such a comfort to me when in that far-off wild country to know that you are with him occasionally."

He still looked as if he would have liked to ask further, and she divined his thought and, as he paused as if debating with himself, said promptly, "And is that all? Why, I should have done that anyway. I not only promise to see your father every week if possible, but if you like will write to you of his welfare and of what takes place about here.

And you in return must tell me something about your new life."

He seized her hand and kissed it gratefully, his face glowing. "Oh, if you will do this I shall be so grateful. I will send you my address on my arrival. I fear I have not time to see your father; bid him good-by, please, for me. May heaven bless and keep you." He clasped her hand, again touched his lips to it, and was gone, before she quite realized the fact that she was alone—only a dull feeling that the day seemed less bright than before.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### A HALF CONFESSION.

My Dear Elsie: I have been very ill. I suppose the shock experienced about that abominable mine business had something to do with it. My head was seriously affected for a while, I am afraid. The doctor said I had incipient cerebritis, whatever that may mean. I wish these medical men would have common sense and use French instead of that barbarous Latin in describing diseases. What a shocking piece of business that mining swindle was, and what a—but he is your cousin, and it must be hard enough to bear the disgrace without my bringing it to your memory, poor girl. And he seemed such a nice young man. Who is it says something somewhere about "deceiving even the angels of light?" My memory has been so poor since my attack. My poor boy is, I suppose you know, with my brother in Chicago, and is going to learn to be a merchant. Edward, that is my brother, keeps an immense clothing establishment there and agreed to try Roland. His father and he had what Ruskin calls a square talk, and he insisted that the poor boy should either enter business or study a profession at once, and so Roland wrote to his uncle to ask for a position in his store. My brother has old-fashioned notions, and is, I fear, a little hard on young men, and was not willing at first to agree to it, but finally said he would try him on condition that he begin at the very bottom of the ladder. Think of my Roland with his ability having to begin at the bottom of the ladder, among those vulgar shop-boys! It is a dreadful trial for a mother, you must know, only you cannot see it as a mother can. I do not know for certain, but I am afraid that Mr. Lewis sometimes asks him to sweep out the store. I am not sure of this; it seems too dreadful! If I thought he was required to do such menial work I should feel it my duty to remonstrate, only I know Ruskin would not permit me, for he only laughed when I hinted my suspicions, and said that the young man must win his spurs, and

he may as well begin cleaning and polishing those that belong to other people first. That sounded something like slang, and I told him so, and he laughed again. Mr. St. Johns came of a good family on his father's side—the Commodore, of Revolutionary times, you know—but his mother's people were (of course, my dear, this between ourselves) only plain, respectable farmers. Excellent people, but of necessity not very refined. These things are to be regretted, for do what you will, it does show in the descendants. I always say to my girls, Never make a mésalliance, whatever you do. I'm not afraid of Angelina ; she believes in family, but I sometimes do have a mother's anxiety for Alfarina—she is so democratic in her tastes. It is the Williams blood, I am afraid, showing itself.

Is it true that all is at an end between you and Roland ? He told me so, poor fellow, and was dreadfully affected by it. I feared he would have a nervous fever, and insisted on his seeing Dr. Bellows. He is very fond of you, Elsie, and I had hoped that you would learn to love him. Married life would have settled him, I am sure, and cured those little defects of character which I suppose annoyed you. Forgive an old friend, but are you not just a little old maidish about such things, my dear Elsie ? Young men must sow their wild oats, and they always make the better husbands afterward. Oh, well, I suppose your mind is made up, so I will not urge the point. But let me, as your mother's friend as well as your own—and you know I look on you as a daughter—let me beg of you not to make a *mésalliance.* I have heard whisperings, mind you I do not believe them, pointing that way, about a certain Russian having been seen frequently in your company. Do not, my dear, I entreat you, allow your sense of gratitude to blind your judgment in these matters. Some obligation you doubtless are under to those people, but I should think that a substantial pecuniary recompense might be judiciously employed to remove that. He is a worthy young man, no doubt, but entirely inferior to you in every way, and then, too, he is much older than you, and young girls are apt to be attracted by the superior intelligence and knowledge of the world of men considerably older than themselves, although in this case the mental superiority is on the other side. Not that I consider the fact of a man being older, indeed much older than a lady, is an insuperable objection to marriage ; indeed, in very many cases it is a positive advantage, for most girls make better wives when the husband has larger experience and knowledge of life, and time alone can bring this. The most serious bar is inferior education and family. But

you will think I am becoming prosy, and so I will close this long letter. Now write me at length and tell me about everything. Kindest regards to your dear father. With love and kisses from all,

Sincerely yours,

LELIA ST. JOHNS.

Elsie had generally shown such letters to her father, as having equal interest for both, but somehow she shrunk from letting him see this one. However, she was not forced to decide this matter immediately as Mr. Hastings was away from home and would not, so the note in pencil on the library table informed his daughter, return until dinner at six o'clock. She re-read the letter of her friend, and decided to answer it at once, as she had yet an hour at her disposal before dinner. She knew well the epistle was penned with a definite purpose, and that was hinted in the latter half. Some natural indignation animated her as she took up her pen and wrote the reply.

THE HERMITAGE, October 30, 18—

MY DEAR FRIEND: Long letters are so rare, these times, that you deserve especial thanks for yours, which reached me an hour since. Give your correspondent credit for promptness in replying. I am delighted to know of Roland's good fortune, for although I may be a little *old-maidish* about it, I cannot help feeling that the worst misfortune in this world for a young man is to be idle, or, at any rate, to have no regular business to engage head and hands. As to sweeping out the store, that won't hurt him a bit, but rather help to give him an appetite and offset more intellectual work. About sowing wild oats. Surely you are not in earnest in thinking that such a thing is necessary for a man any more than for a woman. Is it essential that a young man should spend a portion of the bright opening years of his manhood in dissipation or careless, reckless practices? Surely experience of the world and necessary knowledge sufficient for ordinary needs can be acquired without such expenditure of vital power, such peril to body and soul, as comes from selfish dissipation—for that is what I have been taught to understand is conveyed in the ex-

pression, "sowing wild oats." Surely it does not stand to reason to believe that, after a man has led a life of unrestrained self-indulgence for a time, he is likely to make a better, much less as good a husband as if he had led a self-denying, correct life. Such a theory is monstrous to me, and subverts all the moral teaching I have ever listened to, and, moreover, is so opposed to my own natural instincts that I cannot believe it, nor think that you do either. The man I marry must have led as pure a life as myself, so far as I can tell, and I would rather remain an old maid to the end of my career than marry a man, no matter what his education and family standing, who, ignoring conscience and duty, yielded to his appetites and dragged his life through the slums of sensual indulgence. I loathe and abhor these dissipated, selfish wretches more than I can express, feeling sure that they make brutal domestic tyrants after marriage, whatever the world may say to the contrary. I write with warmth on this subject, for, as you may remember, a dear friend of mine was sacrificed to one of these specimens of humanity who had spent his time before his marriage in sowing his wild oats. The only "mésalliance," to use your term, that I recognize, is the union of a pure-minded girl with one of these *blasé* men of society who has offered up the best powers and possibilities of his manhood on the altar of self-gratification, and has nothing left but the ashes of an ill-spent career to give in exchange for what she has sacrificed to or for him. Roland has escaped, I trust, all danger of becoming such an one as I have been alluding to, but like all young men of large social instincts and plenty of leisure, he has been placed in great peril. As to any fancied attachment he may have had for me, I am sure his good sense has shown him how totally unsuited we are to each other, and he will have little trouble in forgetting me, other than as a friend who always will be interested to know of his welfare. Believe me, I am forever grateful for the kindness of heart which prompts you to advise me, even though I may not always see my way to following out the suggestions. Being left motherless at so early an age, and so thrown much on my own resources, I have developed a self-reliance which does, I fear, frequently shock that estimable old lady, Madam Grundy. However, so long as I have the privilege of my father's counsel and of yours, too, my dear friend, I hope I shall never wander so far from the highway but what I can easily return to it. Let me say, in conclusion, in reference to one item in your letter, that there are some obligations which money can never repay, and that there are some people to whom the tender of pecuniary recom-

pense for kindness conferred would be a gross insult. With love to Mr. St Johns and the girls, I am, my dear madam,

Your sincere friend,

ELSIE HASTINGS.

P. S.—Tell Alf she owes me a letter, and she knows it, too, and I have a rod in pickle for her, to be used unsparingly if said letter does not come soon. E. H.

Just as the letter was finished Mr. Hastings entered the library, bringing a long letter from Louisa Thompson to Elsie, which had been enclosed to Mrs. Seaman, and handed by the doctor to his uncle whom he had met on the road. There being scant time to prepare for dinner, the young lady postponed reading the English epistle until the evening, expecting a treat in its perusal.

"You are looking somewhat pale and careworn, my child; has anything unusual occurred to vex you?" asked Mr. Hastings when they met at dinner.

How difficult always to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and Elsie felt this at the moment, but she smothered the emotion roused by her father's words, and answered bravely: "Yes, papa, I have been somewhat troubled to-day, for one of our friends, to whom we are much indebted, has left us for an indefinite time to engage in what, I fear, is a very perilous enterprise."

Her parent regarded her fixedly for a while after she ceased speaking, not unkindly, that was impossible—but as if asking the inner meaning behind her words, and then answered quietly: "You refer to the younger Russian. Your cousin Warren told me of this a couple of hours since. He said that Mr. Adolph was, to use his own expression, 'fretting his heart out here' about something, and that in his opinion he had acted very wisely. I entirely coincide with Warren in this, for Adolph's position here was too indefinite and anomalous, active though he was in the limited

circle he moved in, to satisfy any man of worthy aspiration. He asked my advice about this offer, some days since, and on due reflection I urged him to accept it. His doing so has elevated him in my estimation considerably, although," noticing her surprised look, "I have always thought well of him. But to think of a strong, capable man like him passing his life in hunting and trapping! He is fit for some larger work, and I told him so."

"But his father, at his great age, and so devoted as they are to each other—and then the wild country he has gone to, living among those savages. It does seem to my mind an exceedingly wild undertaking," expostulated the daughter in a voice suggesting that the excitement of the afternoon's experience had not yet quite subsided.

"Well, my dear, let us not discuss this matter now, or it may spoil your dinner. We will resume the topic when we retire to the library. Tell me about Mrs. St. Johns' letter. I understood you to say you had received one from her?" Elsie told the leading points of the fashionable lady's epistle, and of her answer. This filled the dinner-hour conversation, and as, indeed, neither was very hungry, the time spent at table was shorter than usual, and they soon found themselves in the library. "Elsie," said the gentleman, after a short silence, in which each seemed to be buried in individual reflections: "I do not wish to ask an unwilling confidence, but you well know, my child, that your happiness is my dearest concern. Now something today has occurred to seriously disturb you, for the tears were not yet dried on your cheeks when I entered the house. Do you really feel the departure of this young Russian so much? Act frankly with me, my daughter, for I ask the question solely in your interest, but yet do not press you for an answer, unless you so desire."

The tall, almost queenly form of the daughter shook as if with suppressed emotion, the lustrous dark eyes grew

dim with tears, and the delicate brown of the cheek took on a deeper hue, before the answer came. 'Twas but an instant, however, that she thus yielded to what her naturally strong nature told her was a weakness, and then she rose and faced her parent. "I do feel it, father, very much, for he has entered largely into my life of late, and it is but natural that I should feel such a sudden departure. You have always taught me that the natural emotions and higher sentiments are nothing to be ashamed of—on the contrary, are the best and noblest part of us, and so I do not hesitate to say that my intercourse with these friends has done much to shape and color my life during the past few months."

She resumed her seat, and again there was a silence for a brief period. Finally Mr. Hastings looked toward his daughter, and she detected, with the quick eye of affection, the somewhat troubled expression of his face as he asked: "Did Adolph say anything special to you, I mean in the way of expressing his feelings toward you, or seek to bind you by any promise before leaving?"

"Nothing of the kind passed between us, and so far as that is concerned, I mean any formal or overt act on his part, we occupy the position we always have—friends only."

"Thank you, my dear, you have relieved me very much. I feared matters had gone further than that. It was very honorable of him, very honorable indeed!" and his old cheerful manner came back, and he showed by tone and expression how relieved he felt. So the subject dropped between father and daughter, each breathing more freely that here at least was no longer any secret between them, and they tacitly agreed not to refer to it again unless absolutely necessary. But Elsie felt that, much as she knew her wise parent liked and esteemed the friend in question, yet for some inexplicable reason he did not desire to come into any closer relationship with him, and long and ear-

nestly she questioned, in the silence of her own bosom, why, but no answer came.

The letter from Louisa was as bright and lively as the merry English girl herself. She wrote of "father," and his doings in the City and his trips to the Continent on business, and of "mother" and home, and of the brother and his graduation at Cambridge, not forgetting old Selah Betty at the cottage. Then she came to the pith of her letter, which concerned the trial of Harry Esmond at the Old Bailey in London. "We were dreadfully concerned on your account, and I only speak of it now because it will of course reach you through the newspapers. Father was there one day, and said the prisoner was the most careless and indifferent-looking man in the room. He was ably defended, but the evidence was too conclusive. The judge, in passing sentence, said that it was not safe for society to have such a very clever criminal at large, and that the ability the prisoner had displayed in doing wrong would, if it had been rightly directed, have given him position and influence as a valuable member of society. He was condemned to fifteen years' penal servitude. I hope you do not mind this too much, Elsie, as you or your family are in no way accountable. As father says, 'Any tree may have a rotten branch.' But still, it is a great pity; such a handsome, lively fellow." The rest of the letter was gossipy, giving hints of flirtations and sundry experiences which indicated that in one way or another Louisa Thompson was trying to enjoy life in her day and generation. She vaguely alluded to a certain naval officer who was often at the Yews, who, Elsie inferred from the tone and rather frequent reference to him in the concluding sentences, was specially attracted by the vivacious daughter, although, as the writer tried to imply, "he only came to see papa."

## CHAPTER XLV.

### HOPE DEFERRED.

Winter, after many threatening messages and bravado, had at last declared war and fairly invaded the northern regions. After some preliminary skirmishes between opposing forces in the upper air, the elemental strife had finally culminated in a grand battle—a general engagement, one might say—and the grim old tyrant having conquered as usual, the white banner, everywhere hung out, showed a cessation of hostilities, and for a time peace reigned supreme. Yes, that exquisite repose and quiet which succeeds a terrific storm, that delicious sense of absolute rest which comes to the senses, that marked absence of noise, especially, which a big snow-storm that has been promising long and finally come, covering the whole face of things, induces, was peculiarly perceptible on this Christmas morning, when the young mistress of the Hermitage opened the hall-door and peered out into the thin gray air. Snow, snow everywhere. It seemed as if some mischievous Ariel or Puck had been abroad creating a transformation scene, a regular phantasmagoria for the eyes of early risers. An invading army—an army of occupation, indeed—it appeared to the young lady who stood drinking in the soft, cold air, and the fascinating scene too, with keen enjoyment. Every bush looked like a bivouac, every tree a fortification, and the hedges like long, low lines of defensive ramparts; for the Hermitage could boast of some grand old hedges, that might have vied with those of merrie England—representa-

tives of the taste and skill of the founder of the estate, the ancient Russian. Presently Elsie perceived a horseman working his way slowly through the heavy snow—which was up to the body of the steed, so deeply had it drifted into the avenue—toward the house. He was quite close before she noticed him, for nature had with talismanic skill almost annihilated sound, and the labored breathing of the animal, and the clink of the steel rings on the bit, first gave warning to her ear.

"Ivan Petrovitch!" she exclaimed, in astonishment, "what a morning to be out so early!"

The Russian answered with a smile: "Yes, miss, a very bad morning;" and then, as if doubtful as to the use of the adjective, added, "I mean a very naughty morning."

The use of the second adjective appealed strongly to Elsie's risibilities, but restraining her inclination to laugh, she answered cheerily, "But this is nothing to you, Ivan, after Siberia?"

His brow darkened at the word. "No, no, Siberia is what you say, horrid; this is good. My horse feels it hard, he is a—tired." And he patted the neck of the panting creature, from whose heaving sides and dilating nostrils a cloud of vapor showed in the frosty December air. He handed her a letter, having dismounted for the purpose. "From Adolph Kuprianoff," he said, softly. "The Chief would like to see you soon. He feels very bad for Adolph being gone. Will you tell Hiram when you come?"

"Yes, I will. But won't you have your horse put in the stable, and come in and have breakfast with us? and then I will write a note to the Patriarch—I mean the Chief."

"Thank you, but no, I will wait here; I have had breakfast."

As she could not persuade him to alter his resolution, Elsie entered the house and, sitting by the open fire in the hall, she read the letter hastily, and then penned a note to

the father of the writer, for the letter was from the absent Adolph, and gave it with her own hand to Ivan, who stood awaiting it outside with true Muscovite patience. "Thank you so much, Ivan, for coming this morning through all this snow. How is Nadia and my little Sophia too? Stay, you must take her something for me." And she ran back through the hall and into the library, and at once returned with a magazine full of gaily colored pictures, which she judged would give great delight to the little Cave girl. Ivan was profuse in his thanks, some of them being expressed in his native tongue and by gesture, however, as his vocabulary of English was limited; but what he did speak was well pronounced and the words fairly well chosen, the Russians in this respect being much superior to most other Europeans in learning the language of the great Republic.

The letter which Elsie now re-read, with more deliberation, was as follows:

BEAR CAMP, December 1, 18—.

MY DEAR MISS HASTINGS: If you knew the emotions flooding my entire being at the sight of your name, although traced by myself, the thousand memories of father, home, and friends, and of delightful hours spent—winged hours, which fly to and fro in the azure heavens of memory—you would, I know, in your kindness of heart, pity my loneliness. For I am one of a little handful of humanity in the midst of a wilderness. Nature, imposing, grand, terrific on every side, but, brooding in solemn majesty over all—the Spirit of silence and desolation. Only five of us in a world of marvels. Broad plateaus, seven to eight thousand feet above the sea-level. Mountain chains of vast elevation, with here and there isolated peaks touching the very clouds, stupendous and awe-inspiring in their wondrous altitude and eternal stillness. For some of these vast upheavings of nature's wild volcanic ire, as they probably are, are actually, by our measurement, as high as the far-famed pride of the European Alps, Mont Blanc itself. No feeling but that of religious emotion, adoration of the Supreme-worship, seems fitting in presence of these illimitable altars of God. For who, standing in this cathedral, its

dome the sky, carved with the tracery of the clouds, and with these shrines of immensity before him, the great plateaus near, like vast communion tables spread—can forbear to worship? Then, too, the cañons—what tongue or pen can adequately describe these seemingly fathomless abysses cut through the everlasting hills? For the mighty Colorado, and other streams flowing southward, have, during the countless ages of the past, channelled out and worn enormous gullies or cañons, as our Spanish friends here call them, to a depth in some places of many thousands of feet. The Grand Cañon of the Colorado is truly appalling in its utter dreariness, extraordinary variety of phenomena, and unspeakable magnitude. Think of a furrow, cut by the ploughshare of Time, four hundred miles long and walled on each side perpendicularly by gigantic masses, uprising for the most part fifteen hundred to six thousand feet into the ether! The mind fairly shudders in such contemplation, and one feels to be a particle, a speck, a mite cast athwart immensity. But I must pause and apologize for thus plunging into a wild description of a country you have never seen, and can feel but little interest in, instead of asking about your welfare, and that of your kind father and other mutual friends. I can only plead, in extenuation of such a freak, that I have just returned from exploring this wonderful cañon, and so completely saturated with the amazing sights and experiences I have had, that I cannot talk or think of anything else. It seems to me I must experience the sensation of one who has been privileged to look into an inspired volume, and has found therein a revelation which has opened another gate to heaven, and widened beyond expression the horizon of his being. The geologic treasures which are exhibited to the inquiring eye are almost endless, this unrivalled cañon showing most of the formations, from the underlying granite to the upper carboniferous limestone—a very museum of antiquity, a veritable treasure-house of wisdom. But there I am off on my hobby again, and shall weary you to death.

How are you, my dear friend, and all the loved ones at home? Have you seen my father lately, and is the dear old man holding his own physically?—I have no fears of him mentally. I fear you have heard no word from me since I left, but I wrote immediately to you and my father on my arrival in New Mexico, as this entire region is called, but fear that our scout who carried the letters, bearing at the same time some government despatches from the fort, fell into the hands of the Indians, as nothing has been heard of him since, and no opportunity has occurred to send a second letter until to-day. So

you see I kept my promise, although appearances were much against me. For myself, I have been so crowded with work of one kind and another that, apart from the wild desire to know how you all are which occasionally takes possession of me and renders me almost desperate, I have hardly had time to seriously think of anything outside. I think it will be my salvation, for I could not have much longer endured the mental strife which was raging within me when I left home. To leave was truly like wrenching soul and body asunder—but although a sharp, it was, I am satisfied, the true, and indeed only, remedy. The Indians are our perpetual peril, and many a narrow escape I have had in saving my scalp. I think I can say that I owe you my life; for, in the condition of mind resulting from brooding over my aimless life and trammelled condition in which I came here, coupled with my natural indifference to danger, I am satisfied that long ere this my scalp would be adorning the wigwam of some brave, had not the promise you exacted been ever in my memory as a restraining influence.

We are located about one hundred miles north of the Gila River, and about fifty miles east of the Colorado. The latter is a fine stream, and navigable for nearly six hundred miles—from its mouth, where it enters the Gulf of California, to the beginning of the Great Cañon, spoken of before. It is called Colorado from the reddish tinge of its waters. It is famous for its cañons, and its sudden and startling changes of form and nature. When I tell you that this stream, which at one time will be seen flowing calmly with a width of three hundred or more yards, will suddenly compress itself between granite walls to a width of twenty yards, you can have some idea of the perils of navigation. This is a delightful climate during the winter months, and quite a contrast to what, no doubt, is your experience now. But I must close this long, rambling epistle, asking, my dear friend, that you will lend your gentle presence and kind influences to comfort and cheer my aged parent, that he may not too much miss the dutiful attention of which he is deprived by the waywardness of his son. Kindest regards to your father—I much regret I did not see him on leaving. For you, to whom I owe so much, I can only say that my life and service are yours—a consecration to past memories—and so, as Nadia would say in our Russian fashion, Slava Bogu.

Yours sincerely and gratefully,

ADOLPH KUPRIANOFF.

The winter had come to stay, and the snow packed and hardened until in a day or so a splendid sleighing foundation was laid, and the light vehicles, with their jingling bells, were flying in every direction. To Elsie's delight, her father on the third day after Ivan's visit told her to wrap up well and he would take her to the Cave, calling for Hiram, whom he had notified previously, on the way. In a few moments they were speeding merrily over the frozen ground. Mr. Hastings had noted, with the keen eyes of affection, that Elsie was looking rather pale of late, and a gravity which was foreign to her was observable in her demeanor. Ella Seaman, who was frequently with her, had perceived this too, and, with a woman's quick perception, had partly divined the cause, and tried to win her confidence in the line of her suspicion. But it was a signal failure. Although the frankest of mortals with reference to everything else, Elsie could not be coaxed or persuaded to lift the veil from the hidden grief which her friend was satisfied existed. If her father really suspected the source of the loss of physical tone and somewhat sobered mien of his child he gave no sign by word or deed to her or to others. He had frequently in conversation with his friend St. Johns expressed his opinion that there were certain phases of experience which all young people have to go through before they come to know themselves and settle down to their life-work, and obtain a firm grasp of reality. "Inevitable, I think, to young men and women, as having measles is to boys and girls. Of course, some do not have the measles, or have them after maturity, and so it is with these peculiar emotional experiences—some escape, but they are few." Elsie had escaped the childhood affection, but it may be he thought she was not going to be so fortunate with reference to the later possibility.

As the horse was checked at the cottage door the trapper came out, followed by his spouse, the faithful Gretchen,

who smiled all over, in a sense, so beaming and friendly did she appear. "Oh, Mees Elsie, you have von letter from Meester Adolph. I so glad—I know he vould write. He von fine shentlemen, he is."

Elsie smiled and nodded with a somewhat brighter color than even the brisk drive had brought to her cheeks, for she was conscious her father was looking at her, and this consciousness had an effect which the words might not have had. She had not shown him the letter, although she had told him of it, and given Adolph's message, and now she half feared that he might suspect that the letter contained that which she did not care for him to see, and this annoyed her so much that she immediately said: "I must show you that letter, father—I know you will be interested in the description Mr. Adolph gives of the Colorado cañons."

"Just as you please, my dear. But you can read me any part you like."

"No, you shall read it all for yourself," she said, with an impetuosity which she felt a moment later was utterly out of proportion to the importance of the matter of reading a simple letter. But she was vexed that possibly her father thought she had rather not show it.

The "Giraffe" was unusually quiet as they drove along, but finally burst out with, "Durned ef I believe th' old one's long fur this world."

His companions looked at him with astonishment.

"Why, Hiram, what do you mean?" said Elsie, in alarm. "Surely it is not the Patriarch you are speaking of?"

"Yaas, Mees Elsie," responded the trapper, and he looked consciously guilty, as if he had spoken unwisely. "But I allus was a fool to speak out sudden-like. Maybe 'tain't so mortal bad as I'd a thought, but sartin the old man's a-failing. Kinder hankers arter his boy, I guess."

"It may only be a little temporary ill-health, which at his

great age appears of more importance than it would in a younger person," said Mr. Hastings to his daughter, who looked quite shocked.

"Thet's it, friend Alf. It's sorter sure he can't nowise live forever, an he's most thet now."

The sleigh was left hitched at a short distance from the cave entrance, and the party proceeded on foot. There was a sort of natural porch formed by the outcropping of the rock above and laterally from the main mass of the rise of the hill in front of which they halted. Into this porch or room they entered, seeing nothing but the dark-gray tint of the rough stone forming three sides and the roof of the rude chamber, if such it could be termed, in which they stood. It resembled one of those Caches or natural shelters resorted to so much by hunters and others accustomed to roam in such regions in pursuit of game or other mountain products. At the rear of the apartment the solid mass of the mountain side loomed, seemingly impenetrable. However, a closer inspection showed that this rear wall was fissured by deep crevices dividing the surface irregularly into several superficial sections. The central one was about five feet high and on an average three feet broad, being much wider above than below. The "Giraffe," after inspecting this for an instant, pressed on the left upper corner with considerable force, and to their surprise the visitors saw the great section of rock slowly revolve, leaving an opening into the hill side, showing a dark passage beyond.

"Ivan'll be long with them air pitch pines sooner'n yer kin wink. Guess he's to hum an' heerd us," said the trapper, as they paused in front of the passage, explaining at the same time how that the pressure on the stone in a certain way sounded a bell in the cave, notifying the inmates, who, if satisfied as to the visitor, caused the rock-door to revolve by means of a curious bit of machinery, invented by the

old Russian. In short, this cave dwelling was an underground fortress, which the expenditure of considerable money and ingenuity had rendered almost absolutely secure from intrusion, and as a habitation quite comfortable. Nature had, of course, done the most arduous and important work in tunnelling out these subterranean rooms and passages, and art had supplemented her work in transforming a rude, although in a sense curious and beautiful, cave into a comfortable residence. Soon they saw lights gleaming in the distant darkness, and presently Ivan appeared with his swarthy face glowing in the torch-light, and his "Slava Bogu," in welcome salutation. "Guess Ivan'll see yer through, an' I'll tend th' animal. Say, friend Alf, what time'll thee be suited to go hum?"

Mr. Hastings looked toward his daughter, who said, "Two hours, father, I think, will give us ample time."

Stepping into the passage way the huge stone noiselessly revolved and they, shut up in the mountain, each with a candle in hand, cautiously followed the flaring torch of their guide. In a few moments they were in the familiar room and surrounded by the members of this strange, isolated, but most interesting little family, living on year after year shut up in the recesses of the earth, and so utterly segregated from the outside world. The Patriarch was changed, that Elsie saw at once, and the tears started to her eyes as she thought of Hiram's blunt words. He rose as she entered, but did not advance as formerly to meet her. Yet there was the same bright, beaming look of peace and benevolence upon the aged face, and the same kind, genial voice of welcome.

"My daughter, how kind of you to come again, and your father, too. It seems long since you favored us with your presence, Mr. Hastings, in our, no doubt to you, strange home."

Mr. Hastings greeted the old man cordially. "It is some months, I believe, but still not so very long since we

met. How are you feeling to-day. I suppose the winter is rather trying to you?"

"Not that, for as you perceive we have a summer temperature here and are as comfortable as those in the mansions above ground. Old age is the foe that I have to entertain as a guest. And yet he is kind, a very generous enemy, but the citadel cannot hold out forever against the watchful antagonists around, aided by the enfeebling presence of the one within. No hope of raising the siege, my friends, in this case, and the garrison must wisely prepare for speedy capitulation. Yet if we are allowed to march out with the honors of war, retaining our side arms, we shall be satisfied. In other words, let death come, I am ready, and only ask that I may retain my reasoning powers, with memory, sight, and hearing, to the end."

Mr. Hastings noticed how thoroughly matters had been put in winter trim. On the side facing the Ravine the great wide mouth of the cave was now a huge window, a broad framework of glass and iron against which the storm could beat harmlessly. A roaring fire sent abundant light and warmth in every direction, and ventilation was provided for by pipes communicating with the outside. Nadia and Sophie had, after the salutations had been made, carried off Elsie into the inner room, so the Exile's remarks were addressed to Mr. Hastings. The others now returned, the little maiden clinging to the hand of her friend, to her the representative of the vast world outside of which she knew so little. "I know ever so much English, Miss Elsie, I talk with grandfather every day. Uncle Adolph used to teach me until he went away, and now grandfather hears my English lesson;" and so she prattled on, showing remarkable progress, and demonstrating the peculiar facility with which the Sclavonic race can acquire certain foreign tongues, especially the English.

At the mention of his son's name by the child, the old

man had looked up wistfully, and presently said: "I miss Adolph more than I like to acknowledge. The tie which binds us is a peculiar one. To me he is my child, resurrected—'my son, who was dead, made alive again, the lost found' as an old scripture has it. To others who cannot view matters as I do, Adolph is simply my adopted child."

"I have heard you speak of this matter before, and to me it is at least a curious phase of belief; but is the proof of this rebirth really full and complete to you both. Is Adolph as satisfied on the point as you seem to be?" said Mr. Hastings.

"Yes, and, as might be expected, in some respects it is clearer to him than to me. I fear growing tedious on this point and repeating what I have said in your hearing before, but as I approach the end of my earthly journey these matters become clearer and clearer and occupy my thoughts, often to the exclusion of everything else. I see that this world, this life, is able to develop a man up to a certain point, as exhibited in the best specimens of the race, and that souls must be returned here until that development, or at least such development as they are susceptible of, has been accomplished. This planet is but a link in a great chain of worlds which form an ascending series, a graded development for the sentient children of the Supreme."

"Let me ask a question in the line of your thought, sir. Do you expect to return again to this world?" and the speaker waited the reply with some curiosity, as did also his daughter.

The old man smiled. "I do not. Something tells me my human probation is finished. Many times have I entered by the gateway of births on this sphere, but I think I have now received the training earth can give me. I do not assert this positively, for I may return, but a repeated experience of life gives us this knowledge. Leaders, teachers, prophets, the inspired ones in all the ages, are, as I have said

once before, merely the elder sons of earth ; and the stupid, the ignorant, the slow, as well as the reckless life-wasters, can look forward—if such prevision can come to such persons—to a period when the sharp discipline of repeated life here has developed their dull minds, aroused susceptibility and conscience, and earned for them reputation, respect, reverence. The old Mother Earth will always clasp to her bosom representative sons, the fruit of many generations of life here. I do not claim that my thoughts on this subject are new. I am rejoiced to say they are as old in some form or another as the race. Many of the ancient as well as modern teachers have hinted at this rebirth as a probability or a necessity, but with me it is no mere speculation as with them ; it is knowledge based upon intuition and belief, verified by laborious and varied observation."

"But, father," ventured Elsie, "does not the long years of childhood and youth seem almost a waste of time if one so enters the world for a second, third, or fourth life? If we could be reborn full-grown men or women, and so start from where we left off, it would seem better."

"My daughter, and so start with the prejudices, and predispositions, and vicious tendencies of the old life, which would prove too strong for us, for we should inevitably merely repeat the former experience, and so nothing be gained, but rather much be lost, as old habits and tendencies would be confirmed and emphasized? No, my child ; this new gestation, so to speak, is essential in order that the evil may be, during these years of preliminary life of childhood, as far as possible, dissolved out, separated, eliminated, and the good digested and assimilated. Time wasted you fear. What is Time? Merely the earth-robe in which the eternal veils himself, and to Him there is only the ever present, the now. God wastes nothing. This second experience of childhood is but the sieve through which the results of the former life are passed—the good survives, the

evil is obliterated. The conditions may be such that the sieve cannot do its work effectually, but something will always be gained. The evil tendencies which have fastened, barnacle-like, upon some poor child of earth until progress in the right is almost impossible, his life a curse to himself, and a terror and constant menace to his fellows, possibly cannot be reformed without several passages through this valley of Time. But we may be sure that reincarnation will be his portion until the gold is purged from stain and dross so far as is necessary. The student who fails in examination will be remanded to the lower school until such time as progress sufficient has been made to permit his being received into the higher."

"I think I understand your meaning to be that purity of heart, nobility of intent—moral goodness, in short—is the aim of our earth life, and must be attained here if it requires fifty lives on earth or only one. And assuming such to be the case, it is easy to comprehend how that, as I think you intimated on a former occasion, a man returning here many times on account of moral deficiency, might acquire great wealth of intellectual knowledge and power, merely as a result of repetition and immense opportunity, and so come in process of time to be a mental phenomenon —a genius," remarked the master of the Hermitage.

"Exactly, my son; that is my thought. But I perceive the dear daughter wishes to ask a question. Speak freely, my child, or shall I state it for you? You cannot avoid the thought, that perhaps reverse conditions may prevail, and that a bad man reborn may have the evil in his soul intensified, and so become worse instead of better by continued return to this mundane sphere?" and the speaker regarded her with a look of smiling inquiry.

"Yes, supposing that he be reborn repeatedly amid unfavorable conditions," replied Elsie to her father's amazement at their host's mind-reading power.

"Under very peculiar conditions of evil such a thing might seem to be possible for several rebirths, but the influences of childhood and youth help to avert this danger, their tendency being to purify and develop for good, until finally innocence and purity, the characteristics of that period, neutralize the evil and soften the heart of the wrong-doer. You know a great teacher once said, 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,' and the attainment of the child-like spirit of trust and guileless intent is the end of the discipline of earth; that accomplished our wings have grown, which will waft us to the higher life."

"But if this theory is true, how could we possibly forget the previous life or lives? This seems to me almost a fatal objection to the view," suggested Mr. Hastings.

"My dear friend, it is not a theory with me and many others, who have full and sufficient evidence of it. But as to your very reasonable objection, let me ask, How much do you recollect of your life of say ten years ago, much less of twenty years since? A mere film, a shadow, an impression with a tolerably strong point standing out here and there, a tiny island or so, a mere nothing compared with that vast continent covered by the waters of oblivion. But perhaps we have dwelt long enough on this. Old men must have their hobbies, you know, and the garrulousness of age is proverbial."

The visitors disclaimed any weariness of the topic, and indeed would have liked to have asked more questions which naturally arose in their minds, but to please their host assented to his suggestion, and the conversation became general.

It was evident that the old man was pining for his son, from whom he had not before been separated longer than a few days from the period of his adoption. Elsie's heart ached for him in his bereavement, and she felt some little com-

punction, in remembering her promise to the son, that she had not been to see him earlier, but then she had met him twice since Adolph's departure at the trapper's cottage, and he was so cheerful on these occasions that she had not felt anxious, as she might otherwise have been. On leaving, the Exile declared himself much benefited by their visit, saying they had imparted to him magnetic life and made him feel younger.

Adolph it seemed had written to his father several times, but no letter had reached but this last, inclosing the one to Elsie.

He had given more details of his life and intentions in the home letter, and hinted that if the purchase of the disputed strip of territory then in negotiation between Mexico and the United States was completed, then the party would probably move south of the Gila River, and make their headquarters at the old Spanish town of Tucson, in the centre of the new acquisition. "Professor Darby, of our party, who has been in correspondence with Mr. James Gadsden, United States Minister to Mexico, who is conducting the matter with President Santa Anna, says that undoubtedly it will be accomplished," wrote Adolph, "although the price stipulated—ten millions of dollars—seems enormous to pay for a strip of country infested by Indians, even if, as claimed, it is as large as Pennsylvania." The writer said further that if the purchase was announced in the newspapers, that letters for the future should be addressed to the old town of Tucson, mentioned above.

On the return home the little Russian maiden accompanied them, Elsie having at last obtained the consent of the elders to keep her for one week. The child was nearly wild with excitement and delight.

"And I shall see your pretty home, and live in a house over the ground," she said, repeatedly clasping the hand of the young lady on the journey, as they sped rapidly along.

"Now, Sophie," Elsie instructed her protégée, "if anyone asks your name, or where you live, just say your name is Sophie, and that you live in the country some distance from here."

Secrecy as regarded the cave and its inhabitants was still insisted on by the Patriarch and approved by Elsie and her father, for although they realized that they were no longer in any danger from official or political sources, yet all realized that existence would be made a burden to them by prying, curious people if their peculiar residence and mode of life were once known to, or even suspected by, the public.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### TO SOLVE A PROBLEM.

The heart of the winter was past, the dark days were over. Nature had fumed, and fretted, and stormed, but the sun rose every morning a trifle brighter, adding a morsel daily to the length of the lighted hours, so the fierce storm-king finally found himself beaten, and was compelled to succumb to the persistent advances of the conqueror from the south bearing the golden fleece.

This steady march of Time, that foot-fall ever dropping on the great shore, at midnight, in the meridian of day, like the tireless tread of the sleuth-hound in his relentless pursuit—on, on, on! The day may be dark and dreary, but Time never falters; or joyous and full of mirth, but he stays not; for the pendulum of life ever swings its to and fro, and the minutes mount to hours, and the hours go to swell the fleeting years. No credit here, but prompt payment on delivery. Cash over the counter; we give existence in small or large coins for everything we receive. Eternity the bank, Time the circulating medium, of which each one has so much entered to his credit, and we spend and spend, ever drawing on our deposit, thinking it inexhaustible; but no overdrawing the account in this bank, and the limit once reached, we must perforce surrender our checkbooks.

January, February, March came and went, and now April was here, with its bright look forward, its promise of good things to come. And Elsie sat at her window, pen

in hand, with the fair white sheet as yet untouched, lost in reverie, thinking of the past few months and what they had enwrapped for her and hers in their fleecy folds, for the winter had been severe, and snow and storm had held high carnival. 'Twas but yesterday that the brown earth threw off its white raiment, in which for four long months it had closely enshrouded itself. Four months—a brief period, to be sure, but in that small fraction of life how much can happen to mar or make us?

Elsie felt that these weeks which had swept so swiftly by on winter's wings had been of more importance than their mere external showing seemed to imply. They had intensified and consolidated her life. They had brought as much inner experience as though each month had been a year. They had emphasized that individuality which, while quite a marked characteristic before, had lain comparatively dormant. Her intercourse with the Cave philosopher had aroused and quickened her whole mentality. This ancient sage had by his original thought and Socratic way of asking questions urged her really good intellect to its full bent, and she felt that for the first period of her conscious existence she had learned the great lesson so often missed in our elaborate systems of modern educational training—how to think for herself. Not to get opinions from books, nor to take the thoughts of others second-hand, and use them as her own, but to cope with the subject originally, and cling to it tenaciously until light came in one way or another.

In these weeks the young lady felt that she had developed into a stronger womanhood, although the growth had been an almost insensible one. But the grand fact was patent to her—she had grown. Not a joyful period, these winter months now fast lapsing into the hungry jaws of the all-devouring past, for there had been enough sadness to cloud somewhat the sun of her life and tone the

brightness to gray or neutral tints. This sadness was partly personal and partly sympathetic.

Her aged friend's grief for the absence of his son touched her deeply. To be sure, he rarely hinted his heartache, but Elsie felt it all the more, possibly because it touched a responsive chord in her own bosom. And the problem that filled her mind now and pressed for solution, as she sat by her bed-room window on this early spring morning, was—How should the lost one be restored to gladden and inspire the venerable earth-pilgrim who had so long lingered amid the fogs and damps of the valley of Time? She felt confident, and the thought was dagger-like to her affectionate heart, that whatever was to be done must be done quickly. The Patriarch was slowly fading away, and his time in the lower life was brief.

This was Elsie's firm conviction as she left the Cave on her last visit, a few days since. No other letters had been received from the loved one far away, although they had no doubt he had written, and the dread uncertainty regarding his fate was settling down like a pall on the Cave friends, and Elsie felt the chill of the deep shadow too, in little less degree, although she rarely expressed herself in words.

Her meditation lasted some time, and the mental conflict could be detected in her expressive features. Finally, she rose abruptly and, throwing down paper and pen, exclaimed, "It is useless writing. Have I not done so three times, urging his return, and probably not one has reached him? I will see the dear old father this very morning, and find out if we cannot devise some better plan."

A note was hastily written to Hiram, for the eccentric trapper could read and write fairly, although he declared he never knew how he learned—asking him to meet her at the cave entrance in three hours' time.

"Tell Miss Elsie—all right," was the message brought

to her shortly after breakfast, and soon she was in the saddle urging Gyp rapidly to the place of meeting. No abstract or abstruse subjects were discussed on this occasion, for Elsie proceeded at once to the subject which filled her heart.

After her eager and impulsive questions had brought out the possibilities in the case, and shown what courses could be followed to bring about communication between Adolph and his father, looking to his return home soon, she startled them all—for Nadia and her husband and child were present—by saying: "But these plans, although good in themselves, are too tedious. Why, it would be midsummer before your son could be here. No, he must come before that. Someone must go after him and bring him home."

The little company opened their eyes wide with astonishment at the very mention of such a thing, but Elsie saw by the lighting up of the old Exile's face and the eager, wistful glance which flashed upon her from his eyes, that it was like sunshine to his heart, this audacious proposition of hers.

"Yes, my dear daughter, your instinct is true. If Adolph does not arrive before midsummer he will not see me in the flesh, and I do so long to see him once more," and the aged features exhibited an emotion that was but rarely visible there, and the hands worked nervously. It was but for a moment, but spoke more than a volume of words.

"You naturally inquire, who will go?" continued Elsie, as she stood in their midst, too excited to sit down, and while she spoke she felt the nose of the great hound Alex against her hand. "Ivan cannot go, he is needed here, and besides, does not understand the ways of the country; Hiram knows all the circumstances and is faithful as Alex here, but he lacks the tact and discretion necessary for success in such an enterprise as this. There is only one left who is familiar with all the peculiar requirements of the

case, and that is myself;" and here the speaker fixed her full black eyes, shining like stars, upon the venerable face which was regarding her with mingled surprise and love. "Give me your blessing, my dear father, and I will go and bring back your son." So saying, she stooped, kneeling beside him, clasping his right hand in both of hers.

Laying his disengaged hand fondly and caressingly upon her glossy black tresses, the old man remained silent for a little space, as if trying to control his emotions. At length, in a voice that trembled with deep feeling, he said: "My beloved child, believe me, I appreciate deeply the spirit of noble self-sacrifice and tender loving-kindness which induces you to make such an offer, but I were base indeed did I permit such a sacrifice. No, we must devise some other plan, for I could not look again on your father's face did I permit you to undertake such a perilous journey for one to whom you are bound by no ties but those of tender sympathy, prompted by your own generous, loving nature."

"But I must do this, and with your blessing I shall be safe and succeed in my mission." She rose in speaking and resumed her seat beside him. "I have thought it over fully. I will take Hiram with me; he will supplement me in the qualities I lack, and I can control and direct. Remember, I am a country girl, and inured by daily exercise in the open air to hardship. Anything is better than the dreadful suspense in which we have all been living and which is slowly killing you. This expedition will be a positive relief to me."

"But your dear father, Miss Elsie," said Sophie, who during her week's sojourn at the Hermitage had become much attached to Mr. Hastings. "Oh! I fear he would die without you," and the little maiden cried sorrowfully at the picture her imagination conjured up.

"Sophie is right; this must not be thought of for an instant. Your father's claim, my child, is paramount to all

others. Providence will open up some other way of relief," said the Patriarch feebly—for the struggle between desire to see his son and duty to the absent parent, and unwillingness to accept such a heroic sacrifice on the part of one whom he loved almost as dearly as the son he mourned so constantly, was exhausting his strength.

The visitor perceived this and decided to end the scene, so painful to all, so she said, firmly: "Father, I am resolved. My father will know nothing about it until I return. I have an aunt in St. Louis, and a visit to her will leave the way open, and my father need have no anxiety. In two days I shall be on my way, that is, if Hiram can be ready so soon. Give me your blessing, and I promise you shall see Mr. Adolph within six weeks at the furthest."

The Patriarch's manner changed, and the old look of peace came back to his countenance. He arose with new strength, and placing both hands on her head, said, in a low voice: "May all good angels be with you by day and by night, to guard you from harm; may the spirit of love attend your steps, and shield you from all who would hinder; may the spirit of peace spread his white wings over your head, a canopy to shelter and protect; and may the Supreme have you in His special keeping."

Then the ancient speaker seemed to be directing his gaze into the distance, his hands still on the maiden's head, and his face and form seemed to take on that peculiar prophetic inspirational cast alluded to before, as he spoke half to himself:

"I see clearly—there are dangers and obstacles many, but you will conquer. Darkness, wide-spreading, but light—light beyond. You will triumph, my daughter, and be restored to us in safety, and succeed too in your mission. I shall see my boy again. He still lives. My intuitions never fail me. Go in peace, and may heaven bless you."

So saying, he pressed his lips to her forehead, and quietly passed out of the room.

Mr. Hastings had been called to New York, and when he returned home on the evening of the third day after the visit above mentioned to the cave, he found on inquiry that his daughter was absent, having left home that morning, and that a note from her was awaiting him on the library table. It read as follows:

April 6, 18—.

MY OWN DEAREST FATHER: You will not, I trust, feel angry with me, or even seriously annoyed, when I tell you what I have done. You know you have urged me frequently during the winter to go off somewhere visiting for a few days, saying that I required a change—now, haven't you? Well, then, I have taken one of my freaks, as you term them, and have gone to hunt up a friend in the great West. I am on my way to Aunt Mary's in St. Louis. Father, you must not fret at my absence, although I know you will miss me for a while and perhaps be lonely, but Lizzie and Madam will attend to everything, and you might ask Mr. St. Johns to spend a week or so with you. I felt really as if I must get away for a while, or I should be sick. I will write from St. Louis, but do not worry if I should not return for a month. Ever your loving ELSIE.

P. S.—I gave Mrs. Wagram full instructions in case Mr. St. Johns should come, and indeed about everything else I could think of, but my brain was in something of a whirl, with getting ready, and one thing and another. E.

Mr. Hastings rang the bell, and it was promptly answered by Mrs. Wagram, who had been hovering nigh, half expecting the summons. The lively French woman had been keeping pretty quiet since her exciting experiences in the detective line, and her health, which had been impaired for a time, owing to the high-strung nervous condition in which she had been compelled to live during that trying season, was now quite restored. She was brimful of curiosity concerning Elsie's sudden departure, and hoped that Mr. Hastings could throw some light upon the subject.

"Mrs. Wagram, did my daughter leave any message with you, or say anything about her journey before leaving?"

"No, sir; she said the note would explain everything. Did you read the note, sir?"

"Yes. Well, serve the dinner at the usual hour. Strange," she heard him say to himself as she left the room, and she saw that his child's sudden disappearance had depressed and vexed him, for contrary to his usual frank manner to her while dining, he was taciturn and reserved.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### CIVILIZED AND SAVAGE.

Perhaps it is absolutely necessary that every woman should have at least one confidant of her own sex. A man may devour the chagrins of his lot in gloomy silence, and let hidden woes, concealed griefs, or unsuspected cares eat his heart out. He may bear heavy burdens of responsibility unknown to others, until his spiritual vertebral column bends or breaks, and give no sign. But the gentle sex is wiser, as a rule, and sensibly relieves the pressure of weighty secrets by sharing with some trusty friend. To be able to speak confidentially about our private cares and trials, or our projected enterprises, with someone that we know to be loyal to the trust, and true as steel to the confidence reposed, is comfort and relief beyond all expression. This necessity of human nature, especially woman's nature, is the secret of the great influence of the professions of divinity and medicine. A minister's study and a physician's office are equally confessional boxes, and hold rank with those special chambers of limited area which we find consecrated to the use of the priest and penitent in the old cathedrals.

Before Elsie started on what to the common mind would be considered a very wild expedition indeed, she called to bid Ellen Seaman farewell. The young Englishwoman perceived at once that it was no ordinary trip on which her friend was going. She felt or knew, by that quick, lightning-like intuition which is so noticeable among the more re-

fined and delicately organized of her sex, that behind the placid, matter-of-fact demeanor of her cousin there was deep feeling and a burden of care. Perhaps she gathered something of this conclusion from past knowledge, and a hint dropped here and there, and the active use of an uncommonly observing pair of eyes. Be this as it may, she realized that her friend, who held the place of sister in her heart, nearer to her than anyone else of her own sex in the country of her adoption, was going away on a long journey, to be absent for some weeks possibly, for Elsie hinted as much, and with a burden on her mind which friendship might help her to bear. She went right to the point, yet with such tact and adroitness, blended with such full sympathy, that Elsie could not resist, and finally yielded. It cost some tears, but she unbosomed herself freely, told of her hopes and fears, and of her perilous undertaking.

The young matron was amazed at the daring and courage of this American girl, only two or three years older than herself. And yet it appealed strongly to that heroic element which seems to be present in the Anglo-Saxon race, either manifest or dormant, and her enthusiasm was aroused.

"Elsie, you are a heroine, and must succeed if success is possible. I know you too well to try to dissuade you any further. All I can say is, that if this Russian wins you, he will be the luckiest man in the world, and have the bravest woman in America for a wife."

"Hush," said Elsie, almost in alarm at the words; "remember he has never breathed a syllable to me on such a subject. How do I know that he cares more for me than for anyone else?"

Ellen smiled knowingly, saying, "Yes, yes, I understand all that," as Elsie went on.

"Letters have failed to reach him, and to think of that dear old man, at his great age, pining for the presence of the

one dearest to him on earth, and the shadows of that event which cannot long be postponed, daily deepening around him, and the thought that unless something is done immediately they will never meet, pressing on us all—I could not stand it. I felt it was my duty, for I am not needed here, and I have, besides, peculiar advantages in such an undertaking. I can ride as well as most men, and am very strong and capable of enduring fatigue. I can handle the revolver and rifle with some skill, and besides, my heart is in the work, and obstacles which might discourage another will have little effect on me. Also I shall have Hiram with me, who knows Indian ways and habits perfectly. Never fear, we shall succeed."

A promise of secrecy on one side, and of writing as often as possible on the other, and these two parted. One to her household tasks and meditation for many long days over the confidences which must be locked fast in her own bosom, and the other to enter a path crowded with dangers of whose magnitude she as yet little dreamed.

But Elsie felt much better every way for the soul partnership she had entered into in giving another permission to look into the inner sanctuary of her life. Having been an only child, and from early years, with the exception of her cousin's society, for a great part of her life living alone with her father and servants, she had never formed the habit of giving confidences such as girls and young ladies impart so freely to each other. And it required some great exigency like the present, when she was venturing on an unknown path without even consulting her parent, to bring her to the point of opening her heart to another.

But now that it was done, she walked with a lighter step, and felt a half gaiety which an hour previously would have seemed impossible. It was indeed pleasant to think that another, and that other a woman with all a woman's feelings and sympathies, knew precisely what she was doing or try-

ing to do, and also the motives which prompted her actions.

Elsie's last words to her friend were, "Depend on me, Ellen, I will write promptly when I have anything definite to impart." But the time dragged along very wearily before that promise was fulfilled; then in about twenty days the long waiting was rewarded by a letter, which was snatched up and read with an eagerness that piqued Warren's curiosity not a little.

"Why, Ellen, if that letter were from Queen Vic herself, I might; but no"—taking up the discarded envelope—"it has the great Republican stamp on it, and I'm blessed if it isn't from our little runaway cousin herself, and with the Kansas post-mark on it. What on earth can the wild goose be doing out there?"

Ellen only laughed merrily, and read to herself as follows:

SANTA FÉ, NEW MEXICO, April 26, 18—.

MY DARLING ELLEN: I date this Santa Fé, but we are really seventeen miles northwest of the old town, camped on the upper Rio Grande, way up among the Rockies. Mountains skirting the landscape on every side, most of them crowned with snow. It is very high up here, several thousand feet above the sea-level, I judge. (I suppose I ought, as a true American, to say "guess," but I spare you.) Now you ask, who are the "we?" Firstly, then, the "Giraffe;" secondly, Maunita, an Indian girl; thirdly, Sangar, brother to the last named; and fourthly, the writer. A goodly company, you say—but how did we come together? Well, then, to begin at the beginning. When we arrived at St. Louis and I had interviewed my Uncle Grace, my mother's brother, whom I have not seen since I was fourteen, and explained my purpose in coming to his city, I began to realize how difficult a task I might have before me. My uncle and aunt were astonished, of course, when I unfolded my plans, and did all they could to try and dissuade me. Before telling them, I exacted a promise of secrecy. I told them I could only stay in the city about twenty-four hours, which time I must spend in making preparations and obtaining information. I, of course, only told them

what was absolutely necessary to secure their co-operation. My uncle has traded extensively among the Indians, and when he saw I was determined, he set to work with a will to help me all he could. My aunt, on the contrary, threw all the obstacles she could in my way, and only for my uncle would have written directly to my father. But Uncle Grace has a fondness for adventure himself, and said if he were single he would go with me.

However, I must hasten, for the hunter who has promised to mail this will be starting soon. Uncle said it would be madness to travel through New Mexico without an Indian guide, and he knew a young Indian living among the Cherokees, on the Reservation lying south-west of Missouri, that he thought would go with us. His mother, he said, was a Comanche and his father a Cherokee, and as the former tribe was one of the most powerful and dangerous in the region through which we must pass, it would be of immense advantage to have him along. So Uncle agreed to accompany us to the Reservation to interview the proposed guide, and as he had been able to do him a great favor some years since, and Indians as a rule are not ungrateful, he had hopes of success. Hiram looked after our outfit and Uncle secured suitable horses, so in a very short time we were en route for the Indian village.

We arrived there without mishap, excepting that Uncle's horse shied and threw him, bruising him somewhat; but the brave old man would not delay on that account. It was one of the dreams of my girlhood to live for awhile in an Indian wigwam—from reading Indian stories, I expect—but I must confess I was not enchanted by the realities of Indian life. But more of that when we meet. We were fortunate in finding Sangar at home, and his family gave us an impressive welcome, and served a fine squirrel supper for us on the evening of our arrival. Uncle Grace won all hearts by some judicious presents of bright beads, and jackknives, and tobacco.

Sagaroxo, the head of the family, was a rather fine-looking Indian, but somehow I could not help feeling that the smattering of civilization which these children of nature have, robbed them of much of their wild self-reliance and picturesque independence, without giving any adequate return. They are inert and lazy, for want of the stimulus to exertion which constantly met them in the savage state. Sangar, however, in justice I must say, is somewhat of an exception, and has shown himself energetic and adroit. At first the young man was averse to the trip, and his family too, but I talked to the mother, representing how good an opportunity it would be for him to

visit her relatives, saying I had always heard of their being such a brave tribe. You should have seen the Comanche blood come to the dusky woman's cheek and her black eyes dilate. I involuntarily put my hand to my head to see if my scalp was quite safe, so wild did she look for a moment. But I began to fear that my eloquence had been wasted, as on retiring to our skin-beds nothing had been decided on.

You do not know, my dear, how delightful a skin-bed is after a long day spent in the saddle. I slept, oh, so soundly, although it did seem as if the most thrilling scraps of all the Indian tales I had ever read were rushing wildly through my dreams. I was urging Gyp madly toward a yawning precipice to escape a pack of yelling Comanches close at his heels, when, just as I heard a whizz and felt the keen edge of the flying tomahawk severing my scalp-lock clean to the bone, I awoke with a start to realize in my terror that a cool hand was being passed softly and soothingly across my face. Perhaps I should have screamed aloud, forgetting where I was and only half conscious; but the words reached my ear in a pleasant half whispered voice, "Don't be fraid, white lady, me talk with you a little." The speaker then said in her broken English that she was Sangar's sister, and had taken a liking to me, and would like to accompany me in my trip to visit her relatives; for that seemed to be the idea she had of the purport of my journey.

Just think of taking such a trip for the pleasure of making the acquaintance of a family of savage Comanches. The comical aspect of this idea struck me forcibly as I lay listening to this dusky maiden. Fortunately the darkness hid the smile on my countenance, or the result might not have been so pleasant. She went on to say that she would take care of me and help me and cook for me; if I would let her go, she would manage so that her brother would agree to go right off. It took her some time to tell me all this, for her stock of English words was limited. You may suppose that her words were music to my ears. It was, I could see, of all things the very best. This girl would be a companion and a protection, besides insuring the fidelity of her brother. However, I knew enough of Indian nature to know that I must not seem to yield too easily. So I remained silent as if deliberating, while the regular breathing of the sleepers around, white and red, reached my ears in measured cadence. At length I said, quietly, "What is your name?"

"Maunita," she murmured.

"Well, Maunita," I said, "I would like to talk with you, but we cannot talk very well here."

"Will the white lady come out—moonlight?" she asked, putting her lips close to my ear.

"Yes," I answered promptly, raising myself into a sitting posture.

"Hist," she said, putting her finger on my lips, "follow of me. No, no," she said, laying a restraining hand on mine as I naturally reached for my moccasins, which we had adopted, at Uncle Grace's suggestion, instead of shoes. So I followed her in my stocking-feet, carefully imitating her as she stepped deftly and noiselessly over one or two sleeping forms between us and the doorway.

We emerged from the wigwam into the pale light of the half-showing moon, and following my guide quietly, we passed out of the village, and entered a small clump of trees which I had noticed the evening before. I looked at my watch, it was just half-past two. There were some smooth logs and some other rude seats in this, which seemed as if it might be used as a sort of public gathering-place. My guide now seated herself on the end of one of the logs and motioned me to do the same. As she turned toward me, I found myself confronted by a handsome, medium-sized Indian girl, about nineteen years old.

"A very pleasant face," I said, mentally, as we each spent about three minutes in mutual observation of each other. I opened the conversation by saying: "Well, Maunita, you would like to go with me?" and I took her hand as she gravely nodded assent. I continued. "If I agree to take you, will you be faithful to me and take good care of me? I have lost a friend, and I want you to help me find him and bring him to his father, who is very old and very sick—will you help me?"

She rose to her full height, and laying her left hand on her heart and raising her right to the half moon, which we could see dimly through the spring foliage, said with great dignity, "Me will help to find the warrior and bring him back to his wigwam and the old chief."

It was a solemn compact, and from that moment I felt I was safe. "You shall go with me," I said, taking her hand again, and acting on the impulse of the moment, I kissed her on the forehead. She seemed surprised and then pleased, and fixing her glowing black orbs upon my face—and I fancied I could detect something of the Comanche light which had flashed in the visage of the mother squaw the previous evening—she said, deliberately:

"Has the young chief got any squaw?"

I shook my head, and a quick smile lighted up for a moment the

fixed gravity of her face, as she uttered the expressive "ugh!" at the same time giving me a look which spoke a whole world of feminine curiosity and meaning.

The Indian maiden had evidently drawn her own conclusions, even if the premises were slender ones. I suppose we women are all alike in certain things, civilized or savage, red or white.

Nothing more passed, for these red folks are a reticent race, at least with whites, and we returned to the wigwam as quietly as we left it. The next morning all obstacles seemed removed, and when I proposed that the sister as well as the brother should go with us to search for the young chief, and visit the Comanche relatives, no opposition was made. Evidently my night visitor was a power behind the throne. So here we are, with our tent pitched, our horses tethered, and Maunita preparing supper from some game which Hiram has just brought. How my heart longs for father aud you all.

Your loving Cousin,
ELSIE HASTINGS.

Ellen folded the letter and put it in her bosom, sitting for a minute or two in silence, as if thinking earnestly about something. At length, half to herself, she said without looking up, and as if totally unconscious of her husband's presence, "What a girl she is, anyhow—but that shrewd Indian!"

"Really, Ellen, you might read me the entire letter. I see you have put it away safely until I come home, but please to remember, my love, that I am home, and eager to hear you read it."

Ellen started as Warren began to speak, for so absorbed had she been in the letter that she absolutely had supposed for the moment that she was alone. "Oh, Warren, I would give the world to be able to read it to you, but it would be a breach of trust. My lips are sealed by a promise, so you will not press me, I know."

The doctor looked a little disappointed for a moment, and then, smiling in his usual frank manner, said: "Not for a gold mine would I tempt my little Englishwoman to break a promise. But you can tell me, is my cousin all

right and in good company? She is such a wild cat that I would not be surprised to hear that she had been elected as female chief of an Indian tribe."

"Ah, you cunning fellow! you heard me say Indian and so took your cue; but you can't catch me that way. Yes, she is quite well, and in excellent company."

"Ta ta," said the man of medicine, as he gave her a kiss, and another because she was "like the renowned Geo. W.," he said, and vanished.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### PERILS BY THE WAY.

Whether Mr. Hastings had any suspicions of the true cause of his daughter's absence or not, Ellen was unable to determine, but he found out somehow that Elsie had agreed to correspond with her and that at least one letter had been received. He spent a good deal of time at his nephew's, and Ellen gave him all the satisfaction she could about the absent one without actually infringing on the pledge given. It was evident from what he said, from time to time, that he was in close correspondence with the Graces in St. Louis, and knew that she had long since left that city.

"Elsie ought to have trusted me," he said, a little bitterly, about three weeks after her departure; "I would have furthered any plan she had, cheerfully. I never denied her anything that was for her good."

"She knew that, uncle, as we all know it, but, believe me, there was no intentional deception in this. You will be proud of her when she returns, and I am looking for her every day," pleaded Ellen, earnestly. "Elsie is no common girl, uncle, and cannot be judged by common rules."

But to Ellen's surprise and grief, not a word came to relieve the anxiety until, when June came, Mr. Hastings determined to wait no longer, but proceed to St. Louis and at once institute a search for his lost child.

He had visited the patriarch several times and tried indirectly to find out if he could tell him aught of his daugh-

ter, but the aged man had given Elsie a similar promise to that she had exacted from Ellen, and of course could not fully satisfy the eager desires of the troubled parent, but he always said: "Trust me, my dear friend, when I say she is safe. I know this by a peculiar susceptibility to impressions which relate to those I love. There is a stage which we can arrive at when our souls can be *en rapport*— in instantaneous connection with the souls of those belonging to our spirit-sphere, without regard to distance. I feel that your child, our dear daughter, is quite safe and well."

It was the remembrance of these words, uttered at the last visit and which, unaccountably to himself, profoundly impressed and consoled the owner of the Hermitage, that impelled him, almost, to seek the cave again before starting for the West.

The ancient man was sitting with his eyes closed when the visitor entered the room, and did not open them, but said quietly and without rising: "Sit by me, my son; I know why you have sought me. Give me your hand. Our dear one has been in great peril and the Dark Angel brooded with wide-spread wings above the little band, but deliverance has come, and their faces are set southward toward peace and safety.

The hearer did not smile, for he felt that if sincerity ever dwelt in human breast, it was here. If it was self-deception, then it was guileless, and the intent and faith were equally pure and worthy.

"Is this what is called by some clairvoyance?" he asked, presently.

"Hardly the correct name, I think, for it is not exactly clear-seeing, although I do not deny that almost clear vision may come to some of earth's sons, but they have numbered more earth-years than I, by repeated births. For 'tis the large experience of several lives here, under varied conditions, that gives one this power."

As his visitor was leaving the venerable Russian asked, "What hour do you start?"

"Where?" returned Mr. Hastings, for he had mentioned his trip as yet to no one.

"To seek your child. But tarry a couple of days, and news will be received here from her; a letter is now on the road."

Although fully intending to start the following morning, yet the words of the Exile were so serious that he decided to remain until the time mentioned, half chiding himself for weak credulity in doing so. But the prediction was verified, and on the second day a letter came to Ellen Seaman.

TUCSON, N. M., June 20, 18—.

MY DEAR ELLEN: I suppose you think by this time that I have forgotten my promise—you, home, father, and everything else—and I don't blame you; but I have had such curious experiences. I must try and give you some outline of what I have been doing, but details must be left until we meet, which, I trust, will be very soon indeed, for, believe me, I am just famishing to see you all. But first, let me beg of you to send me a short note by the first mail after receiving this, telling me how you all are, and especially how our old friend is. Send two notes, one to this place and one to St. Louis, on the chance that I may get one of them. I hardly know how to begin to tell you what I have been through since writing last. I know I have had adventure enough to last me a lifetime.

We were camped a few miles north of Santa Fé, I told you, and preparing to start in the direction of the Gila River, hoping to hear tidings of the object of our search. The next day after writing we started early, being mounted on Indian ponies selected for speed and endurance, each of us carrying a rifle and good revolver. Don't be too much startled, my dear coz, at this rather manly declaration. You know I have been used to a rifle since I was fifteen, at least I heard father tell you so one day, and as to a revolver, I can kill a sparrow on the wing at twenty paces. Maunita knew little about the last weapon, though a fair hand with the rifle, but she has become almost as expert as myself under my instruction. Sangar is a good shot, and Hiram is a wonder. I have seen him kill a bumble-

bee as far off as it could be distinguished, but then he has sight like a telescope, as father often declared. I have dwelt upon our shooting ability, in order that you may understand better what follows.

This region is full of savage Indians—the Navajoes, Comanches, Apaches, and Utahs being the most prominent. They are wild and predatory, and difficult to keep in subjection. We travelled as rapidly as the rugged nature of the country admitted, having to climb over a great many elevated ridges, following obscure trails, and in other cases making our way carefully through cañons, in imminent danger of assault by the roving bands of red men. Fortunately we only encountered small parties, who were civil enough, seeing how well armed we were, and also largely owing, no doubt, to the fact that Maunita and her brother spoke their language. These young Indians have been a treasure to us; indeed, I question if your friend would be in the flesh to-day but for their fidelity and courage. Just sufficiently civilized to render them companionable, they yet have the wild spirit of their race, and the hardihood and contempt for danger that makes them thoroughly enjoy such experiences as the traveller through these regions may expect as daily fare.

The third day from leaving Santa Fé had arrived, and apart from the hardships of rough travelling we felt that we had been fortunate in avoiding serious perils. We had encamped for the night under the shelter of a bluff which rose precipitously to a height of two hundred feet or so from the small plateau on which we rested. Some hundreds of feet away there was another dip or decline, somewhat less abruptly, into the valley below, at the bottom of which a small stream tossed and tumbled noisily on its way to the great Rio Grande, of which it was one of the numerous feeders. In short, we were on one of a gigantic flight of stairs which nature, in some freak, had built on the face of this wonderfully diversified region. It was a good camping ground, as there was abundance of room to picket our horses, and a shelf-like ledge of rock cropping out from the cliff-face made a sort of roof in case of needed shelter from the elements. Hiram insisted from the start that we dispense, so far as possible, with fires.

"The pesky varmints'll scent smoke fur 's a mile," and as he said this to me confidentially, he made a half grimace in the direction of the dusky brother and sister who were conversing at a little distance in their native tongue. For the trapper, like most of his class who have seen much of Indian life and warfare, has anything but a cordial regard for these children of the forest. Nevertheless the "Giraffe"

admitted that Maunita was "most white" in some things, and that the other one he guessed might do if he was well watched.

The events of that night I can never forget, and yet they have left an obscure, confused impression on my mind. I was suddenly aroused by a quick exclamation from Maunita: "Apaches—Apaches;" then the report of a rifle close to us. This was succeeded by a yell of pain and rage combined, and immediately the fearful war-whoop burst upon the night air.

A warning voice said: "Squat low, an' mind yer don't shoot them hosses."

We two girls were crouching with our rifles in hand awaiting developments, and half paralyzed, I must confess, for the moment with fear, and at Hiram's words fell prone on our faces. Just in time, for a score of bullets and arrows struck the rock behind us.

"Naow bring yer weapons an' pick yer men," said the trapper, and crawling cautiously forward, we sighted hastily, and fired at some fleeing forms which we saw in the dim starlight. The cries of the wounded ones—for we saw two drop who were carried off by their companions—I acknowledge, made me feel sick at heart for the moment, but we had to defend ourselves and our horses, and it was the attempt to steal the animals which roused the watchful Hiram. The Indian shot by Hiram in the commencement of the mêlée had actually secured one of the horses, and was sneaking quietly off with it, when the bullet of the trapper reached him. The animal at once dashed back to the others and remained quietly until caught later on. The attempt evidently was to steal the horses, and then they knew we should be at their mercy, although we owed our escape probably to the fact that the Red men did not know the actual size of our party. If they had suspected for a moment that we only numbered four, and two of us women, I fear I should not have survived to tell you this story. Of course there was no more slumber for us that night, although the foe did not return.

The next morning we were up and ready to mount before daylight, but Hiram and Sangar decided to reconnoitre, to ascertain if we dare venture from our stronghold. They were absent an hour, and it was full daylight ere they returned. Imagine the suspense of us poor girls! To our dismay the scouts reported that the Apaches had us in a trap, and that we must not think of leaving our present position that day. Having plenty of ammunition and provisions for the present, the trapper advised holding our coign of vantage until there was some diversion in our favor.

"Them durned critters are on the fight 'tween 'emselves, an' maybe ther'll be a scatterin' 'fore the day's gone. Leastways the pesky varmints'll hev to keep their own side o' the fence."

Sangar had found a sort of cul de sac or natural chamber in the mountain side, close to us, in which the horses were placed, and our position was such that the foe must attack from either side, but could not approach in front or rear. I wish I could give you an idea of Hiram. He looked positively terrific, as he walked up and down with "Squeaking Jim," as he terms his rifle, in his hands, watching for a "pesky varmint" to show himself. Our young Indian couple behaved nobly, albeit a little afraid of being taken captive by their ancient foes, the Apaches. You have no idea of the deadly hatred there is between these different tribes. Maunita, half civilized as she is, would, I fear, willingly try her hand at scalping an Apache, should opportunity offer.

Such a day as that was; every hour of it seems burned into the tablet of memory, never to be effaced. There was fighting going on near us, for we heard the rifle reports now and then, and we sincerely hoped our foes of the night before were being soundly thrashed. Our intention was to wait until dark, and then try and work our way cautiously through the defiles and passes down to the plateau below, and follow the course of the stream before mentioned. About dusk Sangar came running in to announce that a large party of braves were coming up the eastern slope. He said they were not Apaches, but Utes, he thought, and by the way they acted he concluded they did not know of our whereabouts, and possibly were not the antagonists of the night before. The first thought was to defend ourselves at all hazards, for, situated as we were, four rifles could have kept an army at bay, but the bloodshed would be awful, and my very soul recoiled from it. I urged that Sangar be sent to open negotiations with these new-comers, if he was satisfied they were not the murderous Apaches, and ask their aid, promising a large reward if they would help us. If they were Apaches, of course we must fight to the last, for after the work of the previous night we felt they would show us no mercy.

This being agreed to, Sangar hurried to meet them, promising to keep himself concealed while he made observations. He had observed them a considerable distance away and had warned us at once. In a few moments the young Indian returned and stated that the strangers were Navajoes, and that on calling to them they had immediately made him prisoner, but, on his explaining matters, had al-

lowed him to come forward and inform us that we must give ourselves up as prisoners. There was nothing else for it, and so we surrendered. I say we, but that only meant Maunita and myself, as Hiram had mysteriously disappeared.

It was a party of warriors on the war path, pursuing a band of Apaches who had stolen some of their horses, and the firing we had heard had been a skirmish between the Navajoes and the retreating thieves, the same, no doubt, that had tried to augment their plunder by the addition of our horses the night before, but in which attempt they were so nicely foiled. Doubtless they mistook our party for the Navajoes, and so retreated into the very arms of the pursuers. They treated us very well, partly because of the fight that we had made against their hereditary foe, for it seems there has existed a feud between these tribes for several generations, at least so the chief of our captors told me. Sangar and Maunita understood their dialect pretty well, and so acted as interpreters.

Fortunately our new friends were on friendly terms with the Comanches, and so as friends and relations of that people we were only held in a sort of nominal captivity, until they came to the Comanche country. We travelled with these Navajoes for several days, using our own horses. They inquired suspiciously after our fourth companion, and we allayed their doubts by saying that we feared the Apaches had captured him. This was Sangar's explanation ; but the fact that Hiram's horse, saddle, and bridle disappeared on the second night after our capture, made me doubt if the Apaches had much control over the movements of the brave trapper. The theft of the horse puzzled our Indian friends very much, as the animals were all together close to the camp. Whatever they thought they said nothing, but kept stricter watch on our movements after, I thought. When about a day's ride from the Comanche village, a guard of six braves was detailed to accompany us to the place, the main body of the Navajoes going south. That night we were suddenly surrounded, and our whole party, with the exception of two Navajoes, taken prisoners by the bloodthirsty foe we had so much dreaded.

I write calmly about it now, but no pen can describe my sensations then. These repulsive-looking creatures, dancing and capering around in their war paint, and occasionally emitting that horrid screech called a "war-whoop," suggested pandemonium and these beings looked like red devils. We were hurried by forced marches to one of their villages, which we reached at noon of next day, and Maunita and myself were given over to the squaws for safe keeping. I need

not detail our captivity of four days among these people. It was dirty and tedious enough. What became of the captured Navajoes we never knew, for they were separated from our party. Sangar and Maunita claimed to be Ojibways from the Reservation, and although the wild Indians despise these peaceable ones, yet they were doubtless much safer than if they had owned to the Comanche blood in their veins. Not to be too long with this narrative, I must hasten to tell you of our rescue.

On the evening of the fourth day we were told that the village was to be abandoned the next morning and that we must be ready for an early start. But before daylight came there were shouts and cries and firing of guns, and we concluded of course there was another attack by Indians and rather rejoiced at it, Maunita expressing the belief that it might be the Comanches to the rescue. But soon we heard shouting in English and the words, "Give it to the red devils! Don't spare 'em!" reached our ears. The old squaw in charge of us shook me roughly by the shoulder and motioned me to follow her. I refused, inspired by the voices I had heard. She seized a tomahawk, but I grasped her arm, and while we were struggling the cloth hangings before the door was torn away and a man dressed in the uniform of a United States soldier sprang in. The squaw gave a shriek and fled, while I turned in delight to greet the new-comer. Judge of my amazement when I met the gaze of the intruder fixed upon me with open-eyed astonishment.

"Mr. Adolph!" I exclaimed; "or am I dreaming?" for certainly the lost one, to seek whom I had ventured into this wild country, was before me.

"Thank God, we are in time, then. Oh, I have died a thousand deaths in thinking of your peril," and the poor fellow wrung my hand, while the tears flowed down his cheeks. He was so overcome by emotion that he dropped on a seat near and covered his face with his hands.

I know I was so affected by this unexpected meeting that I sobbed aloud. I had passed through varied perils since starting, yet nothing brought to my eyes what are called woman's solace—tears; but the sight of this familiar face brought back home and its ten thousand associations, and all regrets, hopes, fears, and vexations seemed to concentrate and find expression in a hearty cry. I expect Maunita thought white folks were made of poor stuff, as she looked wonderingly from one to the other. But of course this emotion or exhibition of weakness, if you choose, was only momentary. Adolph

sprang to his feet, saying with his old smile but in a husky voice, "How weak I am; but the relief after the tension of the past forty-eight hours of dreadful uncertainty was too much for me. Thank Heaven we got the start of the savage red-skins, for an hour hence would have been too late."

We hurried out of the wigwam, Maunita following, and found the village occupied by Uncle Sam's Boys in Blue. I was introduced to Lieutenant Strong, who commanded the detachment, and warmly congratulated on my escape. Maunita, too, was kindly received by them. Three prisoners only had been taken, and in fact I now found that a number of the warriors had left the village before the attack was made, and the rest had made a precipitate retreat on the advent of the troops, leaving only the squaws and a few old men behind. One of the prisoners was the old squaw who had charge of us and was going to enforce her commands with the tomahawk. I begged for her release, as generally she had treated us pretty well.

"Don't you deceive yourself, Miss Hastings," said the lieutenant, a fine-looking man with a truly military bearing; "they had some good reason for their forbearance, or this same old she-devil and her female aids would have tortured you almost to death, and gloated over your sufferings. I haven't been in these parts for three years without knowing the true nature of the Apaches."

Maunita, who understood pretty well what he said, translated it to the old hag, no doubt with additions of her own, and seemed keenly to relish the look of alarm that for an instant seemed to disturb the apathy of the morose-looking prisoner.

I shuddered to think what a fate might have been in store for us had the band succeeded in carrying us off to Mexico, as Adolph informed me was their intention, as confessed by one of the prisoners, a large part of the tribe being across the national line.

"We should have followed you, of course, but the result might not have been so satisfactory. But we will not cloud present joy by suppositions which no longer claim attention. We hope you will accept our hospitality at the fort until opportunity offers to send you safely out of this savage country," remarked Lieutenant Strong.

In a few moments we were in the saddle en route for Fort Downing. Never shall I forget the kindness and hospitality we were shown at Camp Downing, this little military station on the Gila River, but I cannot dwell on that now. You want to know how we were rescued. We owed it largely to that faithful fellow Hiram. I must tell you how.

Hiram managed to disappear, I don't yet know how, when we

were surprised by the Navajoes, but hung upon our skirts, so to speak, until we were captured by the Apaches. It seems about this time he met with a friendly Indian scout, who told him of the capture of a white chief some two months since by the Apaches, and that he was now in captivity at one of their villages. Half suspecting from the description that it might be Adolph he decided, if possible, with the aid of the scout to effect his rescue and then, if his suspicions proved correct, or in any case, with the aid of the white man, to compass our escape. The attempt was successful, and the captive was spirited away one dark night, and proved to be Adolph. I am told that Hiram actually entered the village the night before and located the wigwam where he was confined, guarded by two braves, and contrived in some way to signal him of the intended rescue. They were pursued by the Indians almost to the gates of the fort, and Hiram's left shoulder received a bullet wound which temporarily disabled his arm.

Captain Gibson immediately decided to send a detachment of soldiers with Adolph and the scouts to release us from the clutches of the cruel Indians, knowing well that every hour increased our peril. It was delightful to see faithful Hiram once more. He and the Indian scout Arunutaker had been sent in advance to watch the direction of the Apaches in case they should decide to remove us before the troops arrived. They returned to Camp Downing about two hours after we arrived, and our meeting was a sort of jubilee, I can assure you. The old trapper seemed for once unable to find words to express his joy. The next morning, in spite of the warmest invitations to remain and recruit, we were in the saddle and on the way to Tucson, where it was necessary for Adolph to report before he left for home. A strong, well-mounted party of soldiers escorted us, and we reached that town late in the evening of the same day. Adolph was wild to see his father, and I was as anxious as he to be on the road. Heaven grant that nothing may have happened to mar the pleasure of reaching home, which we hope for soon. This is a rare old Spanish town, and I would like to spend a week or month here instead of three days, which time was absolutely necessary to remain in order to take advantage of the opportunity of accompanying a body of troops which leave here for St. Louis to-morrow.

Hoping this will reach you speedily, and that it will soon be followed by the writer and friends, I remain as ever,

Your loving sister and cousin,

ELSIE HASTINGS.

P. S.—Read this to father, won't you, and explain everything to him, please? I feel dreadfully sometimes to think how unkind my action must appear to him. I would not for worlds that he should suppose that I felt I could not trust him. But I was acting from a sudden impulse and with a faith in my ultimate success, and it was impossible I could have made him see it as it appeared to me. I felt that his cool judgment would have disapproved the undertaking, and his affection positively forbidden it. Then I should have been faced by two alternatives—disobey one that I loved and revered, and whose wish had always governed my actions, or else go contrary to the imperious voice within urging immediate action, a voice which my best intuitions told me was duty's call—and so be wretched. I know my action must have the appearance of being wild and Quixotic, but I had to do it. Do try and make my father see it in this light. Remember I am both son and daughter to him, as he had no son, and what might excite his anger or vex him as done by a daughter, he must forgive as done by a son. But you know what I would say, and kiss him for me. E. H.

If Mr. Hastings was hurt before by his daughter's want of confidence, Ellen could not positively say, but this letter seemed to clear away the clouds.

"My poor motherless girl!" he said. "It is so like her. She is half a boy in her instincts, but it was a terrible peril to run. Thank God she has escaped so far. I shall start at once for St. Louis, to meet her there."

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### HOME AGAIN.

Ellen Seaman was as restless as a caged linnet, all alone in the Hermitage with the servants, listening for every sound which might seem to intimate the approach of the proprietor of the mansion and its young mistress. She flitted to and fro between the library and the hall door, varying the exercise by an occasional visit to the garden, from one point in which, by an opening in the shrubbery, a glimpse of the road could be caught. She had received a note from Elsie the evening previous, asking her to meet them at the Hermitage.

Mr. Hastings had reached St. Louis before his daughter arrived there, and so he and Mr. Grace, with a trusty guide, had started out on horseback to meet the party. The meeting took place about seventy miles from the city, on the evening of the second day.

Elsie's surprise and delight at seeing her parent were unbounded, and their differences, if any could be said to exist, were soon adjusted.

"Elsie, if such a mad impulse ever takes you again, don't conceal it from your father. Believe me, I shall either aid you to carry out your wishes or go for you. You cannot tell what I have suffered during these weeks."

No words of reproach other than these escaped him, and Elsie felt that her beloved parent had fully pardoned what she had not quite forgiven herself. However, as we say philosophically in this world of doubt and obscurity, "All's well that ends well."

"Your father is an angel, my dear, to overlook such a thing," said the rather severe but really kind Aunt Grace, "and I told William I never could quite forgive him for helping you in such a wild-goose chase, but I suppose I must forgive too, since your father has set such a good example."

The Graces could not persuade them to stay longer than a night, for time pressed, at least two of the party feeling, as by a common instinct, that the sooner the journey was accomplished the better.

And here they were at last—and how the dear old home loomed up before them as they rolled rapidly up the avenue! Why, Elsie thought, the old house almost wore a smile of welcome on its quaint and antique face. Perhaps the smiles were reflected from the human faces which greeted the wanderers on the steps of the veranda.

"Oh, Ellen, my dear girl, how is every bit of you? How good it is to be home again!" A warm welcome indeed, even Hugo taking part with joyful face and eloquent tail.

"Why, Elsie, my dear, it seems almost worth while to go away, even to hunt Indians' scalps," said Mr. Hastings, the last clause of the sentence being in a significantly low tone, and with a meaning smile, to his daughter, "to receive such a welcome home as this."

Elsie blushed, saying, "Almost," and then turning to Ellen, eagerly asked, "And how is——?"

"Very weak, but bright as ever, and eagerly looking for your return," was the answer, before the name had left Elsie's lips.

Adolph had left his companions at Melville in company with Hiram, in order to reach his cave home by the shortest cut.

Ellen had contrived to call at Gretchen's cottage every few days, by this means keeping informed of the condition of the aged friend. The jovial Dutchwoman had grown to

love the gentle English girl with her quiet womanly ways, and was delighted to find a sympathetic ear into which she could pour her hopes and fears concerning Adolph and Elsie. These hopes and fears, and woes and joys, done up in a batter of rather mixed English and Dutch, were an unending source of amusement to the visitor, and almost as much so to the doctor, who received them second-hand.

At parting, Adolph had promised to send a note that day to announce the condition of the Exile and notify Elsie when to come, for she was eager to visit this ancient child of earth whose feet she felt must so soon press the golden sands of the eternal shore.

During the afternoon the doctor came in, and Elsie's adventures were related to his wondering ears.

"Why, what an Amazon you are, Cousin Elsie! I shall write to his Royal Highness the King of Dahomey at once to ask if he has a vacancy in his body-guard."

"For shame, you monster medicine-man! I'm not an Amazon, and I sha'n't go to Africa just yet. New-Mexico's enough for me."

"There now, I've roused her Indian blood—please don't scalp me," said Seaman, comically, holding on to his hair as he edged toward the door.

It was an afternoon of recital and asking and answering questions. Of course, the young mistress of the mansion had to endure a good deal of playful badinage about the maiden-errant going to rescue the captive young knight, but being home again and safe, and the object accomplished, paid for all.

Ellen had been particularly interested in the Indian brother and sister, and pleased to hear that they found some of their relatives near Tucson with whom Sangar decided to remain for a few weeks, but Maunita had become so attached to Elsie that she insisted on returning with her to St. Louis, whence Mr. Grace forwarded her to the reser-

vation. "I was most interested in her, and hated to part from her. I wish you could have seen her, Ellen, with those marvellous black eyes and that quiet face, lighted up occasionally with the fierce flames of the slumbering Comanche fire."

"I wonder she didn't eat you in one of those outbreaks of the Comanche spirit. I'd as soon have a tame streak of lightning for a companion," remarked Warren.

"Indians are not cannibals, sir, and Maunita is a very noble girl, if she is a Comanche," returned his cousin.

"Oh, yes, I understand—a very nice girl, I don't doubt, only with an irresistible inclination to seek satisfaction at head-quarters—a sort of scalp affection. Yes."

## CHAPTER L.

### SUNSET GLORIES.

The golden glory of the sunset lights up the eastern skies and anticipates the brightness of the dawning! Late in the evening came a note to Elsie.

My Dear Friend:—Father is gradually fading from earth. Probably he will not be with us beyond to-morrow. Pray come early in the morning, with your dear father, and for his last day give him the joy which your presence always brings.

Adolph K.

And the little group were now gathered around the couch of the aged one who was so soon to pass from mortal sight.

Elsie at first thought that perhaps she had been unnecessarily anxious, so little change did she see in the beloved old man. But a little later the feeling returned that the end was very near. There was no marked emaciation, no special signs of wasting, but a certain delicacy and fragility, and an indescribable lessening of the whole form, as if the wings were being folded and the ruffled plumage smoothed —a sort of symmetrical contracting or shrinking of the physical frame. But the same bright smile and clear eye, the same genial, kind presence, greeted her that had so impressed her at their first meeting nearly two years before.

The Patriarch was reclining, dressed as usual, on his couch of skins, near the great opening overhanging the ravine below, now full to repletion with the exuberant

wealth of summer. Here he had spent most of his time during the past weeks, regarding with pleased, intelligent eyes Nature's kaleidoscopic changes and daily growing beauty. The Exile had been lying for some moments with closed eyes, his right hand fondly clasped in that of his son, when Elsie entered with her father.

"The dear daughter is here ; I feel her presence. Welcome, my child," and opening his eyes, he with sudden strength sat up on the couch.

Elsie was deeply affected, and her tears flowed freely. The clasp of the hand, the deep, unspoken language of the eyes, showed the responsive joy and feeling excited in this aged bosom as she pressed her lips to his forehead.

But when the unfathomable serenity of the larger life falls upon the spirit, and the eternal calm, flowing through the opening gates, bathes the soul, emotion, passion, is no longer possible. The mortal is in abeyance, the immortal part rises above the agitations of the lower life even as a bird of dawn rises, clearing the murky damps and vapors, and from on high looks down on the mists below, itself bathed in the sunlight and inhaling the air of the new day—of earth, and yet above earth, between two worlds. Oh, wondrous moment! supernal vision!

"My dearest child," he said, fondly, but there was no excitement in the tone, only a very tender something that went right to her heart, "how I have longed to behold you again is only known to the All-seeing One. You have come through hardships and perils, bravely and unselfishly encountered, in order to crown and bless my last hours. I owe it to you, my daughter, that my eyes are privileged to see once more my child, whose presence has cheered and sustained me through these many years. Your dear father, too, is with us. Mr. Hastings, I owe you a great debt, for anxiety and suffering endured through your daughter's self-sacrificing efforts on my behalf."

Holding a hand of each, so the ancient man spoke, and then asked that he be propped up, and that all should seat themselves.

"My last day on earth," he said, smiling at them cheerily—"at least for a time. But 'tis not sad to me to pass through this shadowed portal, which admits to other life and fuller being. Nay, I rather rejoice I have had so much of earth. And as the mists clear away, as we know they do when the sun is rising—and the sun is now rising for me, and flooding all my being with his glory—the memory of two former and similar experiences comes to me. Yes, dear ones, I have died to earth before. But on each occasion, as I was ushered into the 'beyond,' the portal of human life re-opened and admitted me again into the family of man. Through all my career I have had a dim consciousness and confused memory of these things, but now they come out clearly, as bluffs and headlands come out of the mass of vapor which before obscured the eye of the mariner gazing at the coast line giving rude suggestive outlines of the reality."

"Father," said Elsie, gently, as the old man paused, "does not talking weary you, and exhaust your strength?"

"No, my dear, I have only so much strength, and it will last me to the end. But your voice brings back to me those pictures which have been so constantly with me during your absence. Let me describe some of them."

And to her astonishment the dying man clearly and graphically sketched the principal events of her experiences in New Mexico. Beginning at her uncle's, he rapidly traced in outline the successive happenings of the journey until the meeting with his son. Then he sketched the old town of Tucson with more minuteness than she could have done, although speaking of nothing but what she remembered seeing.

At first she thought Adolph had informed his father, and

that these were the floating images of that conversation, but the younger Russian met her inquiring glance by shaking his head negatively, and the ancient speaker, whose eyes were closed, answered her thought at once by saying, "No, my child, Adolph and I have not spoken of your journey in detail. I saw these things, and knew of your trials."

After a few moments of silence Mr. Hastings asked the aged Russian: "Might not a skilful physician aid you? I do wish you would let me remove you to the Hermitage and then we could have medical advice. We could move you almost without your knowing it."

Elsie looked up wistfully, but felt at once that the Patriarch would not consent to it.

A smile played over his features as he lay with eyes closed, and Elsie noticed that the face only hinted his extreme age when the brilliant eyes were hidden. No sign of a century of years in them. Those piercing orbs seemed to have entered on a new lease of youth, and wonderfully lighted up and relieved the face.

"Alas, my son, where is the physician that can cure the disease of time—old age, for I have no other ailment? I have lived in this curious dwelling of nature's own architecture for over half a century, and here I can finish my earth-race. I shall pass away with the sunset; I shall go from the land of shadows to the land of light. This body has served me admirably, but it has lost its elasticity and its vigor has departed. The mind is strong, or stronger than ever, but can no longer compel its servant to obedience. When the machinery is worn out, what avails the power that worked through and by it? But you must have questions to ask concerning the strange opinions you have heard me express from time to time. Fear not to fatigue me; on the contrary, it will stimulate what power I have. Let me live while I live; when eventide comes I shall sleep. One ques-

tion I anticipate for you, Elsie ; you half asked it before—how, if my belief is true, the soul is guided in its re-entrance into this life. Is that your question, my child?"

She admitted that it was what she had in mind.

"It is guided, dear one, precisely as it is guided here. Everything within the range of life, and indeed in some sense without this range, is governed by the law of demand and supply, of hunger and satisfaction. Everything having a need gravitates toward that which can satisfy that need. 'Tis the secret of society, friendship, love, life. So the soul, freed from the flesh, seeks the channel of rebirth which offers satisfaction for its most pressing need. This bent, or hunger, or instinct guides it as unerringly back to earth and to the particular earth-channel, which promises satisfaction, as the something within the tiny form of the bee guides it to the honey flower and back to the hive after miles of unheeded wandering. Souls find themselves *there*, because the *there* only could furnish what is needed for their onward growth. No matter how hindered and obstructed, they will yet reach the fountain yielding the crystal water which alone can slake their burning thirst. Many lose all interest in life, and say they have had enough of earth, when they are famished, but the distaste for this world arises from failure to find the food which only can nourish them. Hence the eager joy with which so many leave this state of being to go to heaven, as they term it, when the heaven they seek unknowingly is here, and will be theirs in the satisfaction which comes upon rebirth here, in finding the food to cure the hunger which possessed them. Many born in wealth and reared in luxury starve amid plenty, and leave this life dwarfed and shrunken, who by rebirth in peasant home and amid poverty may expand and grow to giant manhood and larger scope of spirit development."

In answer to a question he said : "Undoubtedly spirits

who have done with earth can return here if their presence is necessary to the uplifting of any child of Time. 'All things work together for good to them who love good' comes from elder days, and certainly, if anyone requires a service which I can best render, I shall be there to render it. The whole universe is a unit to fulfil divine behests. Thousands of whispers from the unseen sphere have reached me, and such come to all if they would heed and attune their hearts aright. This life is nothing but the projected tangible expression of the other and higher life visible to mortal eyes not yet developed to gaze intelligently upon that other state. This world is but the thought of God made manifest to humanity, even as speech is thought in form appreciated by the sense of hearing."

He insisted on the table being spread and dinner partaken of by the visitors and family in the room where he lay, saying their presence was a comfort, and as it was his last day, they must gratify him. During the afternoon he seemed to sleep at times, but promptly answered when spoken to, even in a low tone. His great age had not impaired his hearing or vision a particle.

Mr. Hastings was compelled to leave about four o'clock, promising to return for his daughter in the evening.

"Farewell, my son. If I have become only a memory to you when you return, may that memory be an influence for your good until we meet in other form amid different conditions," said the aged invalid tenderly.

"My dear sir, I trust we shall have you with us a little longer than you seem to think," returned the other, his voice husky in spite of himself. "You have indeed been an influence to me and mine for good ever since I have known you, and I profoundly regret that we did not know of your existence, so close to us, earlier. Believe me, I am sincerely grateful to you for all you have done for us. Can I be of any service in any way I shall be more than glad."

The Patriarch clasped the hand of the speaker warmly, saying, "Providence has permitted us to be of mutual benefit to each other, but so much sunshine came into my life with your dear child that my poor services are lost in the brightness. I know what you both have suffered to give me back my son to bless my dying eyes. I do not forget here, nor shall I there. As a last favor, please act with my boy in arranging matters. Your counsel will be invaluable to him. Familiar scenes must have a powerful attraction for those in the higher life. You have my old home. I shall visit you there."

Hiram, his arm still in a sling, called later on to see the old Chief.

"My faithful friend, brave and true you have ever been found by me. I know what you have done and suffered. If I have any regret in leaving this earth-life, it is because I have to be parted from such friends. Fidelity and courage, what a grand foundation to build on! Earth has much to teach you yet, Hiram, and your probation may be long, but this rugged integrity is a splendid basis, and one or two hundred years hence you will have developed a manhood which in its many-sided excellence will bless the world."

The "Giraffe" shifted his weight uneasily from one foot to another, and the tears filled his honest eyes, as he tried to express himself. "Naow, Chief, yer know a heap, but I sorter guess yer out on my tether. No hunderd years to come on my shollers, I reckon not. Hunderd years!" said the trapper, as if calculating mentally. "No, no, Chief, not for this critter. Durn me—beg pardin, Chief—but Gretchen'd be gone, an' Squeaking Jim'd be used up, an' the eyes'd give out, an' couldn't see ter set the traps. No, thankee, Chief, no hunderd years for me."

Then the thought seemed to come to him that the parting hour was near, and that he must really say good-by to

one he had known and, in his rude, honest way, served so many years; and taking the pale hand of the dying man in his great one, he raised it reverently to his lips, and without a word or look to anyone turned and left the room, something like a suppressed sob alone reaching the ear to give indication of the deep feeling that shook the rugged frame.

"The old Exile lay gazing at the glory of the western heavens painted by the setting sun, for the cave opening was toward the west, and the sight seemed to give him pleasure, for a half smile illumined his face and words of admiration from time to time escaped his lips. At length he said, feebly, "Give me your hands, my children," and Adolph and Elsie, standing on opposite sides, clasped his hands.

"Elsie, my dear child, Adolph has something to tell you when I am no longer with you. You promise me, my son?"

The younger Russian bowed his head assentingly, and yet, as Elsie perceived, with a slightly troubled look, as if the promise cost him something.

"Elsie, you will, I know, deal frankly and truthfully with him, and kindly and wisely too, for 'tis not in you to be otherwise. I have promised him this, my dear one, on your behalf, yet though I know your heart, circumstances may control and duty forbid, but we will not anticipate. Nadia, Sophie, Ivan, farewell. The great change is already on me, the shadows of transition environ me, but these are but the dulness of the *here* in contrast with the brightness of the *there*. Elsie, you will care for these friends and this little one, who have cared for and brightened the pathway of the old man during these latter years?" This was said almost beseechingly.

"I will indeed, dear father; trust me."

"I know it, but I half feared to leave them in a strange country alone, and I away—so far away, perhaps."

He rested quietly for a few moments, as the last faint glimmers of the sunset yet lingered about the cave mouth.

"My son, my twice-born child, it is hard to part from you, but voices from beyond, oh, so many voices, summon me away. You cannot hear them, but I do. And now their faces begin to show on the other shore, and their beckoning fingers gleam brightly as they urge me to hasten. Where am I?" he said, suddenly opening his eyes and gazing lovingly in turn on each one. "A last kiss, my children."

Each in turn imprinted a kiss upon the placid face, almost cold now, as from the breath of the "Messenger" falling upon it. The eyes closed, and a stillness, broken only by stifled sobs, fell on all. Then again the eyes opened widely, filled with a wondrous light, the light of eternity! The sun had risen on the hills of God.

## CHAPTER LI.

### THE FINAL TESTAMENT.

The next morning Mr. Hastings, who had reached the cave a few moments after the aged man had passed away, and brought his daughter home much prostrated by the sad scene, said quietly to her at breakfast: "Elsie, I shall go this morning to arrange about matters with Mr. Adolph. This and your late experiences have been very trying to you, so I wish that you would remain at home and rest, for we must not have you sick again."

Elsie was standing in the bay-window looking toward the avenue, and at this moment saw a horseman coming.

"Father, here is Mr. Adolph, I think, coming now," and the next moment the gentleman had reached the door and dismounted.

"I must ask pardon for intruding so early, but I felt that I must consult with you at once." He was very pale and showed the effects of grief and a sleepless night. "I have brought my father's will." His voice faltered badly, but he went on bravely, "As I think he intimated to you, Mr. Hastings, you are appointed executor jointly with myself. You will not, I trust, feel this a burden. I know it is asking much of you, but father had such faith in you, and confidence in your judgment."

"I shall be more than glad, my friend, to aid in any way at this sad time. My obligation to your dear father is such that I shall be delighted to lighten it even in a small degree."

"Please don't mention obligation, Mr. Hastings. The dear one who has gone never allowed the mention of such a thing on your part, and I must protest in his name. But let me read the will."

The document was properly drawn up in legal fashion and witnessed, dating back some months. In it a sufficient sum of money was left in Mr. Hastings' hands for investment so as to produce five hundred dollars a year. Of this income one hundred and fifty dollars was to be paid to Hiram and his wife, and continue to the survivor after the death of either, and the remaining three hundred and fifty per annum to be paid to Ivan Petrovich, his wife, and child. The bulk of the estate, about ten thousand dollars, was left to the son, asking him not to forget some poor people that for many years had been helped in their life-struggles by the bounty of the aged cave-dweller.

As the son explained, all over necessary outlay had gone in this way since he remembered. "My father was quite wealthy at one time, but constant giving has reduced his estate to what is here mentioned. He has travelled hundreds of miles with me investigating cases, for he claimed that to give carelessly or to the unworthy was a crime, or to help those who could help themselves."

After arranging his estate and requesting that Mr. Hastings would try and procure some suitable position for Ivan, the singular testator proceeded to give directions concerning the disposal of his body.

He directed that the Cave should be his vault. That he be placed, just as he died, on the couch on which he had slept so many long years, and this carried into the great chapel-room of the subterranean house and placed where the water impregnated by the lime would fall from the lofty roof continually upon the body, and so in process of time petrifaction take place. That as speedily as possible everything of value be removed from the Cave and the family take up

their abode in some suitable dwelling as may be selected or suggested by Mr. Hastings. That then all the known avenues of approach to the Cave proper be blocked up by means provided and known to his son. "Not that I would deprive the world of aught which could properly gratify or benefit them for a mere selfish caprice, but consider that there are wonders enough on the fair surface of God's earth to afford abundant opportunity for contemplation and study, without feeling it necessary to open this small vacuum in the crust of the planet merely to gratify a vulgar curiosity. Besides, there being other reasons more weighty bearing upon the happiness and possibly safety of others which largely govern me in this action."

The testament concluded thus: "So, dear friends, you will grant my last requests, leaving me alone with God in this temple reared in the silence and solitude of the long ages. This aged tenement, which has withstood the storms and vicissitudes of almost a century and a quarter, being the third house of flesh in which the spirit-tenant has sojourned since first launched upon this earthly sphere by the fiat of Deity, will change by imperceptible transition to the unyielding rock of which the frame-work of the earth is made. Do not question the sanity of your old friend, for no cloud through his long career has ever darkened his mental horizon in the sense of obscuring intellectual operation, but read calmly and judge dispassionately what I thus write in all the solemn hush which falls upon me standing here in the vestibule of that mysterious change which men call death. Sad misnomer, wild misconception, for there is no death in the universe of God!

"This hour finds me upon the Pisgah height of prophetic vision, and 'tis given me to forecast and tell of things to come. I see light, light approaching, and lambent flames playing upon countless graves, where the sorrowing children of Time laid away their fellows with despair, and chill and

darkness in their hearts, amid tears, and groans, and anguish. But emancipation from gloom, and doubt, and dread is fast approaching and heaven is coming nearer earth, so near that soon the whispers of the angelic throng shall be heard by the children of men. Then the sons of earth shall see and know the reality of that other and larger life about which they now speculate so sadly, so wrongly, and so despairingly.

"The preposterous thought that the Eternal Wisdom created and matured this marvellous world through such countless ages of changing from lower to higher conditions merely to give its children a taste, a mere glimpse of its treasures, will disappear. The monstrous idea that chance, accident, carelessness, mistakes could be allowed to determine whether a spirit clothed in earthly robes was to have a few months, or fifty or a hundred years, of this life, and the training which it could give, must pass away from the human mind as unworthy of the Supreme Wisdom. It has been given to me to know, in my own personal life-experience, and also in that of others, that men live and re-live here, sometimes for centuries, according to their needs, and that no soul finally reaches the next world until it has received all the education and development which human experience can give under every necessary variety of condition.

"Shall the infinite Power which called together forces from afar and focussed them into the wonderful *me*, and projected through the channel of birth this *me* upon the earth for training and education, be thwarted by the fall of a dead branch from the tree-top, or the sting of an insect, or the advent of a fever, or the taking of a poison, or any of the thousand dangers which beset human physical existence? The idea is absurd and cannot be entertained for a moment. Of course, the body could have been created invulnerable and impervious to any disease or

outside influence, but then all the laws of matter must have been abrogated, and the invariability of nature in her operations been invalidated. How much easier to return successively the being, robbed by accident or malign influences of his birth-right, by reincarnation.

"I do not claim that all will have this rebirth, for all do not need it. The offspring of those who have attained this full earth-development will, by heredity, possess largely the virtues of their parents, and so an ordinary life here may suffice. So, too, as the race moves on progressively, shorter sojourn in this lower world will be required until such perfection may be attained that the planet will have accomplished its end, supposing that it was created for the purpose of developing and educating our race alone, a multitude of souls or immortal beings, in number known only to the arithmetic of God.

"I put these things on record here, because in these latter days they are so clear to me, standing as it were a foot on each shore, ready to depart and enter on the next stage of being when the Great Father calls. I will now mention what opportunity has not offered to speak of before, and partly because of the repugnance and distrust with which people receive any thoughts or statements which run counter to previous conceptions or prejudices.

"Some years ago, while travelling in Southern Europe, accident revealed to me the scene of my earthly career immediately preceding this one. The scene opened up before me as I proceeded in my investigations and was amply corroborated by a memory of details which was at once startling and delightful. I traced my life—the former life—from birth until I stood beside the tomb in which the mortal part was deposited at the age of ninety years. A strange story you say! Yes, but the only difference between my experience and that of most others is, that they remember confusedly, and I clearly.

"I have finished. The great future will bring out these truths as men are able to receive them; to that future I leave them. The hand which traced these lines is cold now and soon will change to stone, with the rest of my form, by nature's wondrous alchemy. Let no mortal intrude upon my solitude after loving hands have placed me. Repose, repose in the everlasting arms—the arms of the Mother Nature, the arms of the Father God! But activity, a glorious activity—life, a grand life, in the presence of infinite being and infinite love! Farewell."

As Adolph ceased reading, his head dropped between his hands and he leaned forward on the table, the hot tears, not to be repressed, falling upon it. Elsie and her father were deeply affected also, and for a moment absolute silence prevailed.

At length the Russian looked up. "Father would grieve if he saw me mourning thus, and it may be weakness on my part to grieve for one who had almost doubled common life. But he was not old to me in any sense, and was truly as another self. I spent the entire night reading this manuscript and thinking of past, present, and future, and felt that I must see you at once and read it to you, so that matters could be attended to without delay."

It was decided that Sophie should be brought at once to the Hermitage, and that Ivan and his wife should move the contents of the Cave to the cottage at the gate which had been originally built by Mr. Whitely as a porter's lodge, but kept as a tool-house by the present proprietor. "I will have it cleared out and put in repair this very day. I decided some time ago to put a man in that house who could work on the place, while his wife attended the gate, as soon as I could find a suitable person. Ivan shall have the place."

## CHAPTER LII.

### "LIKE A PALE MARTYR IN HIS SHIRT OF FIRE."

Two weeks later Elsie Hastings sat by the library window sewing. She was alone, her father being absent in New York. She was thinking of the events of the past few weeks and a feeling of sadness weighed heavily upon her spirits. She could not keep her thoughts from reverting to the white-robed figure resting in that silent hall. It haunted her like a spectre. "And yet," she said to herself, "how appropriate and fitting such a mausoleum for such a man!" That superb room with the beautiful pendants and exquisite creations in white—so stainless and pure, emblematic of the life that lived so long and went out there into the profundity of the unknown—came up before her, and occupied her thoughts to the exclusion of everything else.

Sophie had retired to rest some time before; and really the little maiden was a great comfort to her, with her artless ways and pretty speech, for her command of the English was remarkable under the circumstances.

Elsie thought of this family and how she had been led to know them, and how large a place they had, one and all, come to occupy in her life. And gradually her reverie deepened and her thoughts became more complex. She did not hear the girl enter the room, so absorbed was she in her thoughts, which had gradually left the dead and fixed themselves upon the living.

"Mr. Adolph, miss," repeated Sarah for the third time, and then she started like a guilty thing detected, for the subject of her thoughts stood before her.

"Please forgive me. I suppose I was in what father calls one of my brown studies," she exclaimed, with burning, telltale cheeks, as she took his hand.

Several times had the gentleman been at the Hermitage during these past days, and Elsie felt that he had some communication to make from which he shrank. Perhaps she surmised the nature of it, but no hint from him helped her to verify her suspicion, if such she held. He had spoken vaguely of his future actions to her father, but as if his future was a matter of very small moment indeed to anyone, even to himself.

Now, however, she felt that a sort of crisis had arrived, and was not surprised to hear him say, almost abruptly, after the usual kind greeting which was natural to him: "I have made up my mind at last, and to-night will fulfil the promise referred to by my father on his death-bed. But first promise me that you will not allow your sympathy or attachment to my father, or kindness, or memory of slight services rendered, to influence you in any way whatever, but that you will refuse to grant a request that is going to be made to you; will you promise me this?"

"How can I promise when I don't know what the request is, or whether it would be right or wise to refuse to grant it?" she asked, as if perplexed.

"But if I assure you that it will be best for you in every way to refuse the request, will you promise me?"

"Well, in that case I suppose I must say that it depends upon who makes the request."

"No, I assure you that the person making it does it under compulsion and will be grateful to you if you refuse it. Pray, promise me."

"If that is the case then I promise," she answered

dubiously, and yet unwilling to seem obstinate and unreasonable.

A look of triumph blended with pain shot over his face, and he took a seat beside her, for before he had been standing.

"My dear friend, father, as you well know, loved you as a daughter, and I was his son, at least by adoption, and it was the dearest wish of his life that"—he paused as if puzzled as to the words to use—"that somehow you might become one of his family. Do not blame me for my folly, for I am obliged to speak thus. You and I have been brought into some trying experiences together, and—well, he knew my heart; I could keep no thought from him, and he came to think—you know he was very old, and perhaps could not see in these matters as clearly as he could in others—that you regarded me more kindly than he was justified in doing. I argued with him. I represented to him that I was a country-bred man, uneducated, with no social polish, whose life had been spent in seclusion amid simple people—good and true souls as were ever clothed in flesh, but uncultured, with one exception—himself. That I had no profession or social standing, and was also poor. That you were attractive, educated, accomplished, cultured, refined—a member of a proud family, and an heiress. What possible affinity could there be between us? The sun shines on many streams, but the stream sees but one glorious orb in the heavens. Supposing that I did worship at the shrine, I was only one of many, and the goddess of the shrine smiles for all who worship; goodness could do no less."

Here his mood seemed to change, and the tremendous self-control, which she felt he was exercising, to give way. He seized her hand convulsively, and his eyes glowed in the twilight.

"Elsie, you have been the morning star of my life, the inspiration of my being; you have made something of a man

out of a mere clod, and taught me the meaning of life. But is that any reason why I should ask you to link your fate, bright and promising, with a nameless nobody, a foreigner, that your friends would despise, yet I love you devotedly, and ask you to be my wife, for I promised my father that I would do this. I await your answer. Remember your promise."

He had risen in his overpowering emotion, and now again dropped into his seat. "Can you marvel that my soul gravitates toward you as the needle to the magnetic stone, that I love you with all the intensity of my being? Do I not owe to you so much that has made that being worth having? Did you not leave home and father to venture among savages and bring me to a dying parent's bedside? I cannot allow you to belittle what you have done. But for you I should be still in captivity among those bloodthirsty Apaches, and my father would have passed away unattended by his son. I had been two months a wretched captive when Hiram found me. I had made superhuman efforts to escape, and each time failing, had as punishment to 'run the gauntlet,' and was promised death by fire on the first favorable opportunity. No! If I loved you not I should be a monster. Yet no word of this should have escaped my lips had not my father laid this injunction on me and bound me by a promise. I am not selfish enough, not so lost to all sense of true manhood as to take advantage of the feeling of gratitude, or sympathy, or pity, or other prompting of kindness in your nature, for what the dear one passed away had been able to do for you, or, casually, myself. It would cost you too much, and I demand no such sacrifice, even if your father sanctioned it, which is not possible. No, I go back to New Mexico, carrying my great love in my heart as a star in the night shining from a moonless sky. I shall become a frontiersman, hunter, naturalist, and so may lead a useful if not a happy

life. Fear not to hurt my feelings, but remember your promise, and speak frankly."

He stood again before her, with folded arms, calm, resigned, all trace of outward passion gone, save as the flashing eyes told of the tempest within.

Elsie was not by any means unmoved during this impassioned appeal. She realized the generosity and magnanimity which prompted the strange action of this declared lover, in previously exacting a promise of denial of his suit, when all the memories and associations of the past, and every look and tone, even the very promise asked and given —given without suspicion of its meaning—pleaded powerfully on his behalf. Candor, honor, truth were written on his brow; dignity, manliness, courage, filial affection characterized his life; and then the memory of benefits conferred by him and his, and of perils and trials encountered together—all this spoke with ten thousand tongues and assailed the heart's fortress with a power that compelled capitulation.

Her rapidly changing color, the tears trembling upon the lashes, the half attempts to speak in the pauses of his impetuous utterances, would have indicated promptly to any suitor not preoccupied with a mighty resolve to stifle the very passion which inspired his whole being, filled his heart, and gave eloquence to his words—the true state of her feelings toward him. That she reciprocated his affection ardently, truly—revealed itself in every lineament of her expressive face, changing responsive to the emotion within, like a mountain lake ruffled by the play of unseen currents in the depths below.

"Elsie," he said, taking her hand, for as yet she could not find words, nor trust her tongue to answer him—"I may call you so for once, the first and last time—I await your answer, which sends me forth into the world a homeless wanderer, after a brief dream of joy that filled and absorbed

my life. But fear not to speak that word; I can bear it. If I have been weak before, I am strong now. It is your duty to your father, your friends, and yourself to speak it, and I entreat that you allow no minor considerations to influence you in speaking. If I suffer, it is just; I have been presumptuous—mad. Oh, God, I tried to struggle against this," and he strode up and down the room, the whirlwind of his passion again for a moment sweeping over him. "To escape, I left my home and my aged parent and fled to that wild region, only to find that the mind cannot fly from itself. But I am mad. Why should I torture your kind heart thus?" for, overcome by emotion, she was weeping. "Speak, Elsie—Miss Hastings—and I will depart."

She must speak now, and though her voice trembled somewhat, and a mist veiled the brightness of her eyes, she said reproachfully, "Was it kind to bind me by a promise, and then tempt me to break it? Am I so selfish as to allow all the generosity and self-sacrifice to be on one side? Still you leave me no alternative but to say—Be it so. I keep my promise."

At her opening words his face lighted up for an instant, then paled into deeper gloom, and his iron self-control seemed to take a new grip; as sometimes when the night begins to lower, and the shroud of darkness settle over all, a sudden gleam from the horizon restores the vanished half light, making the blackness visible for a fleeting moment, passing almost ere perceived into profounder obscurity.

"You reject me, then?" he asked eagerly, yet hoarsely, in a voice which seemed to sound the depths of suffering—such accents as might come from racked victim when the torture had become almost unendurable, and he longs for any change, even death itself, to end speedily his misery.

She bowed her head, not trusting herself to speak.

He grasped her hand with one that burned with the fever of emotion leaping through his veins, turned, reached

the door, looked back, saying, "Farewell forever! It is better so. Thank you for this, and forgive and forget my weakness. May the glorified spirit of my dear father be with you to shield and bless you always."

An instant more and the darkness of the night received and hid him from sight.

Elsie sat where he had left her, her head bowed on her hands, for some moments; then she started up, a sudden resolution seeming to take possession of her. Hurriedly she sought her writing-desk and with hands that trembled wrote hastily. She rang the bell. "Tell James to take this at once to the cottage at the gate, to give it into Mr. Adolph's hands, and wait for an answer."

When the Russian received the note he was busily engaged in making the concluding preparations for his journey early the next morning. He answered almost impatiently, when summoned below by Nadia, for his whole system was unnerved, and he longed for daylight and the beginning journey to distract his thoughts and restore in some degree his equanimity. On glancing at the writing he trembled so that he was forced to seat himself in order to conceal his agitation. He then read as follows:

MY DEAR FRIEND: You exacted a promise from me, which I faithfully kept. I now ask one of you in return. It is this—that you defer your journey until I send you a package to be delivered to my Indian friends, Sangar and Maunita. Promise me this in writing, and greatly oblige,

ELSIE HASTINGS.

"I thought surely the bitterness of death was past; it is cruel to continue the process," he murmured to himself. Then with a sigh of infinite pain and weariness he tore the half sheet off the note just received and wrote in pencil:

DEAR MISS HASTINGS: It must be as you request. I purposed starting at four o'clock, but promise to await your package.

ADOLPH K.

## CHAPTER LIII.

### HEART LANGUAGE.

"What time did father say he would be here?" Elsie asked on receiving Adolph's answer.

"About one o'clock in the morning, miss," replied the girl; "but he said particularly that you was not to sit up for him."

"Yes, I know, but you need not stay up for him. I will let him in, Jane."

"She returned to the library, and now noticed, as she took up a book to try and read, a small cabinet of curious workmanship lying upon the centre table. She began inspecting it and was struck with the beauty of the carving. Then she saw an envelope addressed to herself, and a key lying upon it, resting on the table by the cabinet. The envelope bore the inscription in the quaint, clean handwriting she remembered so well: "To my very dear daughter, Elsie Hastings. From her old friend, Nicholas Kuprianoff.

"Dear child, I have not forgotten you, though I am *here* and you *there*. No flimsy wall of partition can hinder soul from soul."

Some hot tears fell on the paper as she read and re-read before opening the cabinet. It was of richly carved oak, having on the lid a red circle of ivory and a small steel dagger piercing the centre. The box contained a number of jewels of antique and chaste design—a necklace, bracelets, rings, and brooches, besides several other ornaments of a

pattern she had not seen before. The whole formed a unique collection, intrinsically valuable, as well as in a larger degree from association.

A card at the bottom of the case had traced on it in red ink: "These heirlooms, coming to me through two centuries, were intended for my daughter, had Adolph married before I left earth; but failing that, are for my dear adopted child—my daughter Elsie Hastings."

Adolph had spoken of this cabinet casually—a mere hint of a keepsake left by the Patriarch for Elsie, and had purposely refrained from bringing it over before, but now had placed it upon the table and forgotten to mention the fact, so completely had the painful emotions of the hour dominated all his faculties.

"Elsie, my dear, what is the meaning of this? You should not be sitting up at this time." But something in his daughter's face checked him, and he followed her quietly to the library.

After bringing his slippers and dressing-gown—he watching her, wonderingly, in her unusual reticence, realizing that something had gone wrong—she threw her arms about his neck and cried bitterly. He did not seek to stay her tears for a few moments, knowing well that this outburst would relieve her pent-up feelings, but sat fondly and soothingly stroking her long, glossy black hair, which hung loose and dishevelled on her shoulders.

Finally he said, quietly, "Elsie, my dear, tell me all."

Then with an effort she calmed herself and told him gradually the events of the evening.

Mr. Hastings listened without interruption to the narrative, and remained silent for some moments after she ceased; so long, indeed, that his daughter half-feared he might be angry. He was not exactly what would be called a proud man, that she well knew, always placing worth and genuine manhood before birth or wealth or name; but

yet she knew there was that in his nature which shrank painfully from the, so to speak, Bohemian element of life. He had, she was painfully conscious at this moment, a sort of feeling or prejudice—if such a sentiment can be entertained by a just man—a sort of republican contempt for *foreigners*, aside from the British, whom he did not regard in that light. At length he looked up, and his manner was grave though the voice was kind.

"Elsie, I half-dreaded something of this sort. I greatly esteem this young man, and we are deeply indebted to him and his adopted father in many ways, and I should have rejoiced, if opportunity had offered, to manifest my gratitude in some other way than this. But, my dear child, as I have often told you, your happiness is my only concern. Your dear mother left you as a precious legacy to me, and my only anxiety is to prove worthy of the trust. In the light of recent events it seems useless to put the question, for I anticipate your answer, but I will ask it: Do you, my daughter, really love this man? Do you feel that his presence in your life is truly necessary to your happiness?"

There was no mistaking either the tone or the words as they reached his ear in the silence of that room, the ticking of the clock on the mantel alone being audible, its hands pointing to the matutinal hour of two.

"I do, father, with my whole soul. He is the noblest man I have ever met."

"In that case, my dear, you may retire to rest, and sleep soundly, and I will see this Spartan of the nineteenth century in the morning; especially," he said, regarding the blushing girl with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, "since your Talleyrand diplomacy has tethered him so nicely."

Elsie flung her arms round her father's neck, kissing him fondly on both cheeks. "Thank you, my own dear father," she said fervently, and left the room.

## CHAPTER LIV.

### DAYLIGHT COMES AND THE SHADOWS FLY.

The next morning, at six o'clock, Mr. Hastings was standing at the avenue gate, glancing up the road leading to Melville.

"Did he say positively he would be back at six?" he asked of Nadia, who was watering some flowers in front of the cottage, which her taste and skill had made look very pretty and attractive.

"Yes, sir," she said. "He say he go station to find out for his journey."

"Ah, yes, I think I see him now, and will go and meet him."

Adolph glanced up shyly as the proprietor of the Hermitage approached, and for a moment paused in painful indecision.

"Good-morning, Mr. Adolph," he said, cheerfully, at the same time offering his hand. "You take early walks, I see."

The other looked at him furtively and inquiringly; but the frank smile he met in return removed any unpleasant suspicions he might have, and he answered, with something of his old-time frankness: "Yes, sir, it seems to me that in the early morning the true spirit of nature is abroad. I get my best thoughts at these times."

"I fear very few take much time to think, early or late, in this busy, rushing age of ours. But I want to have a talk with you, so suppose we walk up the road a piece."

The other looked somewhat uneasy, but readily assented.

"I hear that you propose to leave us, and wish to remonstrate with you. Surely you can do as well here as you can in that wild country of New Mexico. Of course there is much to attract a young man in that strange frontier life. Plenty of danger and adventure, and were I a few years younger would feel like joining you; but there is another side to the question. It is a rough country and people, and for a while rough men will do to break in both the one and the other. Now, I believe that the true prosperity of the world depends largely upon each individual doing the work he can do best, and is best adapted to. You can do better work than that; so why throw yourself away? You are still in the prime of your manhood and strength, are intelligent and capable, possessing qualities which may make you influential among your fellows. Had you not best reconsider your resolution?"

The other had listened patiently, and the flashing changes of his expressive features from time to time, showed the effect of the words on him. He looked down as Mr. Hastings ceased speaking, and seemed to be studying the formation of a bowlder lying near.

Then he raised his eyes. "Thank you sincerely, my dear Mr. Hastings, but I have looked it all over, and feel that it is best for me to go away to a new country, and begin an entirely new life. My life is broken here. Besides, what should I turn to? I have but little education, and so a rough, out-of-door life is best suited to me and I to it."

"Well, well, I agree with you that a life out of doors will suit you best—at least an occupation which involves that, and so I was going to make you an offer."

"Please don't, dear sir; my mind is made up. I really cannot stay here, but I am profoundly grateful to you, believe me, I am."

"Yes, I know, but I must tell you anyway. I am becoming somewhat old and need assistance in managing my farm here. Now, I must either employ a superintendent or sell part of the estate, for I cannot attend to it. So I offer you the position of overseer at a liberal salary. You are honest, intelligent, and skilful, and will just suit me. What do you say? Take a few days to think of it if you like."

The Russian impulsively grasped his hand. "You are a good man, Mr. Hastings—the best after my father I ever met—but I dare not stay here; it is best to go;" and his voice vibrated with the misery within him. "Your whole estate could not tempt me to stay. What is money, position, anything, to peace of mind, and that I could not have here?"

Mr. Hastings regarded him keenly while he uttered these emotion-choked words, and then, as if satisfied with the scrutiny, said with a warmth in marked contrast with his previous deliberate utterance, "Give me your hand, Mr. Adolph. I honor you, upon my word I do. You have manifested a delicacy and self-denial which is exceedingly rare. Elsie has told me all."

His hearer started convulsively, coloring painfully.

"You love my daughter, and that is the reason you are leaving; because you believed such a match would be utterly distasteful to me. Perhaps I had other and different views for her, but that is neither here nor there. I believe she is attached to you. You have been brought into curious relationship with each other during the past year, and have been mutually helpful. Now, I am not a hard or unnatural man, and the happiness of my child is my first consideration. So you see, the seemingly impossible may be possible after all," and the speaker smiled almost cheerfully, for the thought of giving his loved one to another was a painful one to him in any case.

The play of feeling on the ingenuous countenance of the hearer, as the father went on speaking, was wonderful. The rebound from the depth of a pitiless and hopeless fate to the open sunlight of happiness—the exultation which showed in every feature, and could not be repressed, seeming to fairly transfigure him,—this glory of a brief season of joy which gave free scope for hope and faith and affection to soar afar into the rare ether of bliss, known but once perhaps on earth, a foretaste of the heaven which is to be, this tide coming in with that one word of Mr. Hastings—"possible," bore him aloft upon its surging billows. But the face darkened as an afterthought came.

"I fear you have not fully considered the nature of what your generous words involve. Remember, I am by birth a peasant, of peasant stock, for I will not at this moment claim Nicholas Kuprianoff as my parent, being in your eyes merely an adopted child of his, although you know how he regarded the matter, a belief which I share. But I am, as I said, in the eyes of the world, of peasant blood, uneducated, never being at school in my life. I know nothing of polite society or its usages. A peasant, an ignoramus, a child of nature—reflect, this is the man that you propose to make your relative, to receive into your family and introduce to your cultured friends; to be a reproach to you and to cause you to regret in the future the weakness of a moment of generosity. I cannot permit such a sacrifice. If I loved your daughter less I might weakly yield to your kindness, if it be that she really cares for me, but I love her too devotedly to permit her to give up social position and the advantages of her birth for my sake. My secret should have remained locked in my own bosom and been carried to the grave but for the promise made to my dying parent. The keeping of that promise has cost me more than tongue can tell, but the agony of death is over now, and I am resigned to the inevitable. It was not a right thing to promise, per-

haps not right in that noble old man to ask it, but he knew my secret, and the deep love he bore us both prompted him, and in the misty moments of death's twilight it may be, he saw less clearly than usual. I acknowledge with shame that I agreed too easily to his proposal, for it may be that if I had protested he would not have insisted; but what could I do at such a moment?"

Adolph had spoken rapidly, as if making a confession, half to himself and half to Mr. Hastings, hastening as if in fear lest voice or resolution, or both, should fail him; and also possibly to preclude interruption, which was attempted on his hearer's part once or twice. He went on: "In the light of that death-bed, and by the blessed agency of sorrow, I have come to regard life on higher lines than before, and to realize that self-sacrifice for those we love is alone worthy of true manhood, as it is a duty, and should be a pleasure. Let us forget this as if it had never been, Mr. Hastings, and remember the poor Russian as one who had accidentally crossed your path, and for a brief period basked in the sunshine of your life with you. I cannot see my future life, but, come weal or woe, never shall I forget the generosity you have manifested this morning."

"It might be so settled, my friend, if only you and I were concerned in the matter," replied his hearer, with kindling eyes; "but you forget that there is another who has something to say on the subject. Come and take breakfast with us. No, I can't excuse you. Remember Elsie wants to give you a package."

And so, perforce almost, the younger man yielded, and the two bent their steps toward the mansion.

A wrinkling of the brow, and lips tightly set as if to nerve the owner to bear with fortitude further trial, were the only indications the host saw of his guest's disquietude.

Mr. Hastings turned the conversation into other channels, drawing attention to various changes which he pur-

posed making in the grounds, talking so pleasantly that it proved infectious, and when they reached the mansion the visitor was almost cheerful. Elsie was on the veranda, holding a book in her hand, but evidently absorbed in thought.

"Come here, Elsie, my dear," called out her father. And as she came down the steps and gave her hand to the guest, with some slight confusion in her manner, he continued: "Would you believe it, but I have been trying to persuade our friend here to give up his return to that wild Indian country and remain with us, and he positively refuses? I have offered him the position of superintendent of the estate, but yet he declines. So I have brought him to you, asking that you will try and persuade him. By the way, Mr. Adolph, you have not seen those rare camellias sent me from New York; they are superb, and you, as a botanist, will appreciate them. Elsie will show them to you. Don't be late for breakfast." So saying, Mr. Hastings ran lightly up the steps and into the house.

Elsie led the way down one of the shady paths, followed by Adolph, who seemed as if dazed, and indeed felt as if in a dream. Not a word was spoken until the flower-bed was reached.

After a few words of formal, forced admiration of the flowers, which merited the "superb" applied to them by the owner—but there are periods in our lives when heaven's richest treasures brought before the vision could not be seen or admired, for the sight is turned inward and we are blind to all external things—Adolph said, "I received your note, Miss Elsie, and shall be glad to take the package. I start at eleven."

Elsie turned red and white alternately, and seemed to be trying to desperately resolve. She was more than commonly courageous, as we know, but she knew the decisive moment had arrived, and she needed all her latent strength to meet it.

"Perhaps it is improper, and in the eyes of the world unwomanly, for me to speak, but human happiness is too valuable to be thrown away for mere flimsy, make-believe propriety." Her voice, at first wavering, gained steadiness, as she went on with increasing courage: "You have told me that you love me, Mr. Adolph, and through a mistaken sense of duty are determined not to try and win me to be your wife. So you force me to speak, as in my opinion it would be more unwomanly to remain silent. You won me long ago by your innate nobility of character, which manifested itself in spite of disadvantages of education and social position. You say you love me, and," her eyes falling before his, "your affection is returned, and if you ask me I will be your wife, let Madam Grundy say what she will."

"What! You have counted the cost and are really willing to be mine, with all the sacrifice which that means?" he asked, his voice trembling with emotion, and eyes filled with tears.

"Yes, I am," she replied, firmly.

"Then I should be more than human if I longer refused the great blessing heaven offers me," he exclaimed, rapturously, folding her in his arms. "Elsie, my own life and love, may the spirit of my father bless us this hour, as I know he would were he still on earth, and I believe can in that other sphere."

When they reached the house the owner saw that matters were settled. Adolph led Elsie up to her father.

"Mr. Hastings, I may be weak, I may even be wicked, but I must throw myself on your generosity. Elsie has promised to be my wife, and I will accept the position of overseer you offered me a while back."

"All right," replied the other; "and as the salary was not mentioned, but was to be liberal, I suppose I must give you Elsie as the first instalment." Then taking a hand of each he said, in graver vein: "Perish pride, and let higher

motives rule. To modify somewhat the words of the old Grecian sage, 'I would rather marry my child to a man without a college education and social position than to these advantages without a man.' I shall not be the loser in this, for I shall retain my daughter and gain a son. May Heaven bless you both."

The evening of our story-day has come, and the shadows of the ending begin to gather on the landscape. Little more remains to be told in these few moments of fast-fleeting light. Mrs. St. Johns appeared at the wedding with her two daughters, like a planet attended by satellites of only lesser brilliancy. Of course she was dreadfully shocked, and the word *parvenu* escaped her lips frequently. She confided to a few chosen friends that Elsie had had a much better offer ; in fact, an opportunity of marrying into a very respectable city family. "But she was always such a strange girl." Mr. St. Johns agreed to forgive and forget the mining speculation, on condition that he be consulted in all similar proposed transactions for the future. Perhaps the very liberal fee received from the owner of the Hermitage for services in the trial helped to mollify matters.

Dr. Seaman and his wife were, of course, conspicuous on the eventful day, the latter proving invaluable in aiding the bride in all matters incidental to the occasion.

"Her large experience," the doctor remarked, "gives Ellen the necessary weight and dignity to offset the wild Indian proclivities of the Star Performer."

As to Seaman himself, practice came to him from all sources, and he speedily took front rank in his profession in that neighborhood.

To Elsie's great joy, some beautiful mementos and the kindest of greetings from the Yew Villa reached the Hermitage on the wedding morning, bringing pleasant memories of the warm English hearts across the ocean.

Sophie became a sort of privileged companion for Elsie, who resolved that she should be thoroughly educated. To be near or with her friend was happiness enough for the little Russian maiden. Hiram, by the advice and assistance of Mr. Hastings, purchased some acres of ground near his cottage, and added the profits of small farming to the precarious earnings of a trapper. As for Gretchen, no day was long enough to express her joy at the turn events had taken in keeping her favorite Adolph at home, for next to Hans he was in her eyes the very salt of the earth. Mrs. Wagram, after Elsie's marriage, went to live with her sister, and finally married the chief of police, who was fascinated by the courage displayed by the vivacious Frenchwoman in the Hermitage business, of which he had knowledge through the sister.

Of the hapless Harry Esmond nothing was known for several years, when accident revealed, through the medium of an old newspaper, that he had been shot dead by the guard in making a desperate effort to escape, at the penal station where he was confined. A New York paper with the notice of the marriage of his cousin was found marked in his cell, and Elsie and her husband drew their own conclusions as to the attempt to escape and the wedding notice having anything to do with each other. At any rate, though Elsie shed some sad tears at the pitiful fate of her girlhood's playmate, yet she felt it was better so than that his escape should have given him opportunity for future crime, and she shuddered to think of what that crime might have been, prompted by the mad passions of jealousy and revenge.

The new couple decided that it would be better to drop the name of Kuprianoff, Adolph declaring that it would please him better to let it rest embalmed with the sacred memory of the grand soul he reverenced so profoundly—a sentiment his wife fully shared. So, at his father-in-law's

request, he took the name of Hastings, Mr. St. Johns arranging that the act received such legal sanction as was necessary. But he was generally known as Mr. Adolph.

He developed the Hermitage grounds and farm until they became famous in that section of country ; and among scientists he came to take high rank as a practical geologist and botanist. Ably seconded by his wife in all works of benevolence and philanthropy, they made an enviable reputation in the neighborhood.

Mr. Hastings, as he came to know the truly noble qualities of his son-in-law, rejoiced that he had not yielded to the temptation which at one time so sorely tried him, to refuse to sanction an alliance which alarmed his pride. When later on he was solicited to run for the State Legislature, and declining, on account of his age, was asked to suggest a candidate, he promptly named Adolph. The Russian at first refused, but finally yielded as a matter of duty, and was elected, serving two terms.

During this service, he was largely relieved of the more onerous cares of the Hermitage estate by the efficient services of our old friend Mr. Lippens, who finally decided to leave the detective service and seek his fortune in the New World.

On renewing his acquaintance with Adolph, the latter gladly offered to give him the position of acting overseer of the estate, which was promptly accepted. Lippens amply justified this confidence by his skill and efficiency. He was the son of a clergyman, and educated at Eton, but declining professional life, had entered detective service as a matter of choice.

Three healthy children came to bless the Hermitage home and make music for the grandfather's heart. As in all true marriages, the speeding years only made Adolph and Elsie nearer and dearer to each other. The memory of the past was very dear to them in spite of its sorrows, and the pres-

ence of the "Patriarch" to them both was a very real thing —not a mere remembrance, but a living fact, and an inspiration in all they undertook.

Often they rode or walked to the scene of so many hallowed associations, and conversed of the once home beneath them—the wonderful Cave, where lay, in the profound and eloquent silence and solitude of that singular tomb, amid the marvellous creations of Nature's subterranean forces, the revered form of the "RUSSIAN REFUGEE."

THE END.

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